

THE MASKED ISSUE

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AUG. 2003

ISSUE 07

PS2

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INCLUDING:

BRUTE FORCE

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STEALTHY!

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NINJA GAIDEN

FIRST HANDS-ON WITH THE
XBOX GAME THAT WILL
ASTOUND YOU

INTERNATIONAL KARATE!

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46

DOA ONLINE

TECMO'S HIT FIGHTING GAME, DEAD OR ALIVE, IS COMING
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Violence

PlayStation 2

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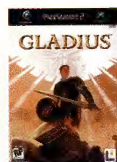
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GET MORE FROM YOUR GAMES

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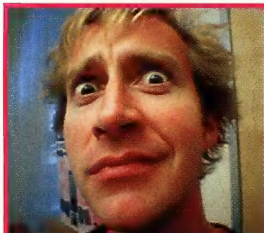
→ Those aren't painkiller-induced hallucinations, that's just *Wario Ware, Inc.*

2003 AUGUST | **ISSUE 07**

GMR®



IT'S THE ISSUE AFTER E3, SO
DON'T EXPECT ANYTHING TO
BE SPELT CORRECTLLY



➔ Yes, kids, you too could look like this if you spend too long standing next to the speakers at Tecmo's booth at E3. Or any other booth, for that matter. Having returned from this year's show with a cold, three hangovers, and only half the brain cells I arrived with (four, if you're interested), I can report that, well, there's an awful lot of games about to drop on your head this Christmas. In round numbers, 13 direct *Grand Theft Auto* knock-offs (*Grand Theft Unicorn!*); 450 games with brightly colored animals in them that give you the thumbs-up when they pick up a crystal/key/gold coin/disease; 74 titles that let you drop out of helicopters and shoot terrorists and/or people who just "popped out for some cigarettes;" 80 games with some sort of Orc or troll in them; 19 with the words honor, duty, or serve in the title; 9,450 racing games that let you pick the angle of your spoiler and calibrate your brakes to the nearest atom (but curiously none that let you choose heated seats—the true mark of civilization!); eight Nintendo titles that make a "woooo-ooop!" noise every time you move and 6 million 3D action games with robots/musclebound space dudes and/or sexy space chicks in them; and 303 sequels, 429 sequels of sequels, and a pixel-shaded partridge in a pear tree (that two seconds later is sniper-rifled by a 12-year-old).

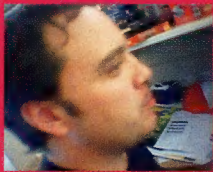
Simon Cox_Editor-in-Chief AGENT 000

CLAWS JAMES MIELKE EXECUTIVE EDITOR



Fondest E3 Memory: Having Itagaki and Kojima fight over who was really Milkychan's best friend made a single tear run down the inside of James' thigh. But when Miyamoto showed up and bitch-slapped them both, Mielke had to check him. "Whoa, Shiggy! There's enough of me to go around!" And then he woke up in his hotel room and realized it was all an alcohol-induced dream. Or was it....

DR. YES TOM PRICE NEWS EDITOR



Fondest E3 Memory: Memories? Tom has no memories. He remembers walking into his hotel room on Monday and the rest is a blur until being dumped outside the city limits Friday afternoon. The only evidence that he was actually at the show are a few embarrassing pictures of him dancing with the Tecmo girls on stage and a black eye courtesy of one pissed off game developer. Good times!

BROWN MEMBER GERRY SERRANO ART DIRECTOR



Fondest E3 Memory: Unlike the rest of us, Gerry's E3 was relatively relaxing and stress free. That's because he was in New York, away from the constant teasing and verbal jabs of his cruel coworkers. That's not to say Gerry didn't party. According to his friends (and the NYPD), Gerry spent all week drinking da whiskey and practicing his capybara mating call at the zoo.

FOMMY YELLOW DAVID CHEN MANAGING EDITOR



Fondest E3 Memory: At first, David liked the idea of being mistaken for a celebrity, with his too-cool swagger and constant VIP treatment. But he soon tired of the constant shouting of, "hey, is that Short Round?" Sadly, the celebrity he most resembled was the "can you hear me now?" guy, due to the fact that every time anyone saw him, he was on his cell. Good thing David's got a googleplex of minutes on his plan.

NUMBER THREE ANDREW PFISTER WRITER



Fondest E3 Memory: Since young Pfister moved to California from the icy wastelands of Wisconsin, he's been waiting to break out the short pants. Unfortunately, no one told him San Francisco was colder than Valhalla in December. But E3 is in sunny L.A., and Pfister was free to let those pasty white thighs get some sun. It would've been nice if he put on a shirt, though. The booth babes got a little scared



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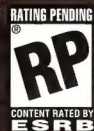
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PlayStation 2



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POST

IF YOU'RE GOING TO WRITE TO US COMPLAINING ABOUT OUR MAGAZINE, YOU SHOULD ACTUALLY READ IT FIRST

TOILET HUMOR

Hey guys and Caroline. First things first. I love your magazine. I subscribe to *OPM* and *Nintendo Power* along with you guys and I gotta tell ya that whenever I read your mag, it's a huge breath of fresh air.

I love the little intros you do about everyone at the beginning of every issue. I especially liked the one about David Chen living in Elysium and being fed by naked oiled-up nymphs. However, I was shot down hardcore by the thought of Gerry naked and covered in cod oil—totally

gross, but extremely funny. I'm often heard throughout my house laughing while I'm sitting on the toilet. That's right, I do most of my reading on the pot; I happen to spend a lot of time there. My toilet has been notorious for helping me study for tests and thumb through boring history books (I've beaten a couple of Game Boy Advance games there, too). My restroom is best coupled with your magazine, though, and I'd have to say that that's a very prestigious thing. Anyway, enough about my toilet—keep up the good work and I'll definitely be reading your magazine till I'm old and bald...and almost dying...on my toilet. Cowabunga!

Jeremy Maly

Where do you think we write most of the magazine?

HOOKED ON PHONICS WORKED FOR US

I spent my money on an Xbox and on your magazine. What I was promised was good, nonbiased advice. What I received fell far short. I want to quickly point out some recent examples.

1) In the article *The Art of Online Gaming* on page 38 of the June 03 issue, the writer clearly points out the positive experiences he has on PS2 and other formats, while making comments like "playing Xbox *Mech Assault* online is like trying to find new ways to date a cantaloupe."

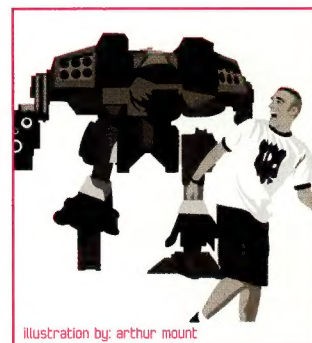
2) In *Top Ten Games: All Formats*, there's not one Xbox game. When you had the chance to place an Xbox game on the *All Formats* list (*World Series Baseball 2K3*, which was rated No. 1 on the Xbox

chart), you chose to use the PS2 version of the game.

3) In your May issue, one of your writers stated that 75 percent of Dreamcast games are better-looking than the current crop of Xbox games.

After reading this last issue, I am requesting that you cancel my subscription so I can spend my valuable time reading a good, solid, nonbiased game magazine.

Eric Heun



Finished, Eric? Well, allow us to retort!

1) Perhaps you missed Seanbaby's comments about *SOCOM* ("Firefights are filled with orders no one can possibly follow"), *Asheron's Call* ("This game could not have done more to make me quit playing it"), and *PSO* ("I'd have all the fun of killing 400,000 giant rabbits all over again"). 2) We didn't choose the PS2 version, the American consumers did. That's because IT'S A SALES CHART. 3) No, we said *Soul Calibur* looks better than 75 percent of the current Xbox games. And it arguably does.

Reading: It's fun-damental!



WRITE US: GMR@ZIFFDAVIS.COM

THOU SHALT HAVE
NO OTHER

I have a beef with whoever wrote the 5 Devilish Games article in issue #2, pg. 67. Do you have a Satanist among the fine selection of staff at *GMR*? I think so. It's it Caroline King?! I hope that there is some faith in God within the walls of *GMR*. I would like to see a counterarticle on 5 Godly Games. Who knows? Maybe doing this article could save some of your *DOA: Extreme Beach Volleyball* fantasizing souls. Peace.

Dylicious

While it usually is the one you least suspect, Caroline is, like, totally not a Satanist. We farm that out to our freelance guys. And if God didn't want us to drool over girls in bikinis, well, he wouldn't have made them look so fine!

KEEPING THE
DREAM ALIVE

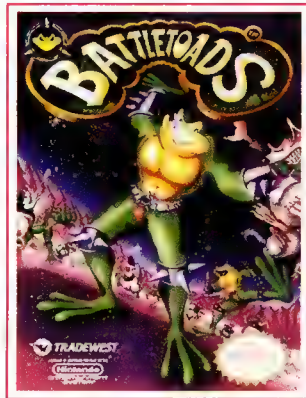
In your June issue, a man named Cliff Jones asked you about becoming a pro gamer. You told him to keep on dreaming because the chances are slim. Well, I'm here to tell Cliff Jones that if he wants to seriously turn pro, he should look no further than Korea, where pro gamers are as popular as professional athletes, and they make a ridiculous amount of money. Here is a website to start him off: www.worldcybergames.com/.

Sam Daddeh

RARE OPPORTUNITIES

Hey everyone! Great mag! Here's a thought—now that Rare is with Microsoft and they have lots of power with the Xbox, we can look forward to some great games. However, *Kameo* doesn't turn my crank. I think Rare should go retro like a lot of companies are doing and bring back one of their best franchises: *The Battletoads*! How cool would that be? Am I the only one who remembers this awesome game? With the power of the Xbox, kicking ass *Battletoad*-style would be 2 SWEET! That is, if the big N doesn't hold the rights to the game. What do you think?

Rare (and by proxy, Microsoft) still owns the rights to *Battletoads*, so a new 'Toads game isn't out of the realm of possibility. One thing's for sure—we'd much rather have that than *Grabbed by the Ghoulies*.

MY MOM THINKS
I'M COOL

To all you fools, In issue #6, you made fun of a couple of geeks. I can see making fun of the Ivy dude, but you were mean to the *Star Wars* kid. And for guys who sit in an office all day playing videogames, you are pretty mean to your own kind [geeks]. I'm sure your parents are really proud of your jobs. If you were making videogames, you would be intelligent, but you just play them, retards. I don't like you.

Shane Kelly

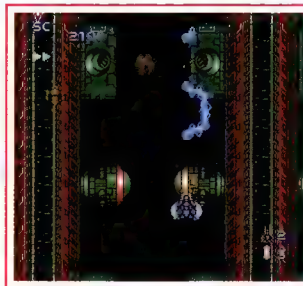
Actually, Shane, most of our time in the office is spent wearing sunglasses,

hosting freestyle rap battles, giving each other bitchin' tattoos while blindfolded, BASE jumping off the roof of our building, and checking our hair every five minutes. We only play videogames and watch *Star Wars* so we know what we're talking about when we make fun of people who aren't nearly as cool as we are. For that, Mr. and Mrs. *GMR* are very proud.

MOSTLY USEFUL
GUIDE TO SHOOTERS

I really enjoyed your article *GMR's Really Useful Guide To Shooters* (one of my favorite genres) and discovered that there is a wealth of quality shooter titles out there for my old Saturn system. However, I noticed there was no mention anywhere of two of the greatest old-school shooters ever made, namely *Zanac* (FCI) for NES and the mother of all shooters, the incredible *Blazing Lazers* (NEC) for Turbografx. How could these two inspirational masterpieces slip through your exhaustive research? Inquiring minds want to know...

Bill



We're glad you enjoyed our little feature and agree with you that both *Zanac* and *Blazing Lazers* are indeed awesome shooters for their respective platforms. The reason they weren't included was because of a lack of space. Considering how many awesome shooters are out there, we were lucky to fit what we did into four pages. We really just wanted to pay homage to one of our favorite genres and draw attention to some upcoming highlights. This helps influence publishers into bringing these games to the States, and with games like *R-Type Final* and *Dodonpachi Daijyoujou* riding the fence, every extra little push helps. ☛

MESSAGE
BOARD
JUNKIES

Ever want to chat with a *GMR* editor? No? Well, OK then. There are plenty of other people to talk to on the official *GMR* message board. Go to www.gamers.com and check it out. Just try not to step on anything...



We recently asked our board denizens what they thought about the Retro/Active section, and they offered suggestions for future reviews:

I absolutely love Retro/Active. I think it's one of the best sections in *GMR*, really, and I honestly wouldn't mind seeing it increase just a little bit. I always like happening upon old gems that slipped by me along the way. — Kris F

I absolutely love it. It's on par with Game Geezer, whom I adore because he always says what I'm thinking. Retro brings back so many happy memories, and it makes me hook up my old systems again. — Scieri

As for another Retro review, I'd have to suggest *Dragon Spirit* for NES. It's my all-time favorite shooter (keep in mind that I've only ever played NES shooters, though), and I just don't think it's ever gotten the recognition it deserves. — jrnsmall

They should review some of the good old FF games. — DayWalker2K4

I would like to read about *MGS* (GBC) and some more original Game Boy games. — Luigi(Sunshine)

Quote of the Month:

I have these friends who're roommates, and all they've done for the past two years is play *EverQuest* and run back and forth between each other's rooms to tell the other one about the raid they just killed. — Comdog, dq, in response to last month's Game Geezer

FRONT

GMR NEWS NETWORK



IN THE NEWS

SONY HARDWARE ANNOUNCEMENTS 013

→ Sony shows off its latest gaming hardware

TALENT 016

→ Michiru Yamane, Castlevania composer, talks arias and symphonys

PARAPPA ANIME 016

→ Our favorite rapping pooch takes another stab at TV

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004 017

→ The Skaarj are back and they brought vehicles

THE REAL (WILL WRIGHT) WORLD 017

→ Sims creator gets a TV deal

INTERNATIONAL REPORT 027

→ Bonk!





XB

PS2

→ Sony's dreams of world domination are close to becoming reality. The promises they made about the PS2 being an all-in-one entertainment center get that much more believable with the inclusion of a 120GB hard-drive, useful for "taping" all of your favorite *Iron Chef* episodes.

PSX-TRA

SONY ANNOUNCES BEVY OF HARDWARE UPDATES

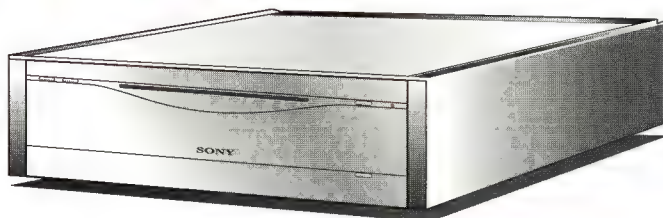
BREAKING NEWS

As if announcing PSP weren't enough of a surprise, Sony unveiled a second new PlayStation product a scant two weeks later: PSX. Combining a PlayStation 2, hard drive, and DVD burner in one sweet, sleek package, PSX is Sony's long-awaited first stab at a PlayStation set-top box.

With a TV tuner and 120GB hard drive, PSX (not to be confused with the original PlayStation nickname) can function as a TiVo-style device for recording and pausing live television, with the option of burning your programs to discs with the built-in

DVD-R/RW drive. The Ethernet jack (hello, PS2 Network Adapter) also gets you online to download program contents and link with your PC...and might even be used to carry out Sony's old PS2 plan of selling downloadable music and movie content. There's also Memory Stick and USB 2.0 compatibility (looking forward to PSP, perhaps?). And it plays all your PS2 games just fine.

If this makes gaming sound like a bit of an afterthought, well...that's the point. This isn't actually a Sony Computer Entertainment product; nor is it designed to appeal to gamers. This



is a Sony Electronics product, designed to sit next to Sony's other high-tech A/V kit. Which makes sense, for where SCE has thrived, Sony Electronics has stagnated. By tossing in the powerful PlayStation brand and touting PS2 compatibility, SCE gives its electronics division a major boost.

However dubious the reasoning for PSX, it looks stunning. Two white wooden panels box the sides of the otherwise smooth white finish, as well as serving as the unit's legs—yes, like PS2, PSX can also be stood upright (allowing you to show off the big ➔

XBOX 1.5?

IS MICROSOFT PLANNING AN UPDATE FOR ITS CONSOLE AS WELL?

Rumors coming out of Japan have Microsoft releasing a new version of its more powerful, yet financially underperforming, console there. Word is that the newer Xbox will be released in conjunction with the much anticipated MMORPG *True Fantasy Live* and will be significantly smaller than the Xbox currently on the market. Microsoft's reaction to this rumor has been the standard "MS doesn't comment on rumors of impending releases," but some industry insiders see this as a serious effort to inject life into Xbox's flagging sales. We'll keep you posted.

logo on the side). Curiously, the controller ports are at the back, which could prove problematic. And we still don't know where the memory cards go, though our bet is they're on the flap below the slot-loading drive.

Sony has yet to reveal the price or release date for the device, except to say 2004 (with Japan seeing it this year). Our real question: With PSX and PSP coming in the next year, where's PS3?

SONY'S GAME, MAN!

Nintendo has long held an unshakable monopoly on handhelds, but with the official announcement of Sony's PlayStation Portable (PSP), that could all change. Although it isn't coming out until late next year, Sony's PSP promises to be a high-powered gaming device with a whole lot of extra junk in the trunk.

For starters, Sony is claiming PSP will be the Walkman for the 21st century. The built-in Memory Stick slot (for AAC and ATRAC digital audio) helps sell that point, but what about the games? Sony's claim that it can deliver PS1-caliber games on a handheld sure got our attention. The problem: Sony has yet to announce details—there hasn't even a sketch of what the thing would look like (ours is from "I Dream of PS3," *GMR #2*.)

All we have to go on are details that raise only more questions. PSP will use an optical drive that plays tiny 1.8GB discs. We've got to wonder how much juice the disk drive and LCD will eat up of the built-in rechargeable lithium-ion battery.

Can Sony's handheld pull it off? Sony blew up on the console scene in '96—stealing Nintendo's thunder. More important, it's already getting support from the big developers (Electronic Arts' name has already been announced). You do the math.



EYE EYE, CAP'N!

Plugging a webcam into your PS2 didn't sound so hot when we first heard about the EyeToy. In fact, the term "fey" sprang to mind. But we're ready to backpedal a bit and admit that Sony came up with some cool ideas for what you can do with a tiny digital camera attached to your PS2.

Set to ship in the Fall to the tune of 40 bones, the EyeToy comes with a disc of 12 minigames—basically, a collection of dopey, but strangely addictive, action titles. Think of them as a set of party games that can sub in when you need a break from *Dance Dance Revolution 2: Electric Boogaloo*.

Set the camera atop your television and frame yourself in the picture. Then, using the onscreen interface, "touch" menus and select a game. Next, prepare to flail your limbs. Some of the more interesting titles include *Wishi Washi*, which has you cleaning the TV screen by waving your hands around; *Kung Foo*, which lets you knock away oncoming ninjas and *Beat Freak*, an arms-only dancing game. ▶

_Darren Gladstone & Ravi Hiranand



GAMEPORT VITAL GAME INFO. NOW BOARDING..

✈ Arrivals coming soon

SYSTEM	ETA	TITLE	HOW HOT?
GC	JULY	MARIO GOLF: TOADSTOOL TOUR Watch out for the Piranha Plant on 14.	🔥🔥🔥
ALL	JULY	NCAA FOOTBALL 2004 Male cheerleaders, the option, and drinking early on Saturday morning.	🔥🔥
PC/XB	JULY	PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN The game formerly known as <i>Sea Dogs 2</i> . Thanks, Disney!	🔥
XB	JULY	STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC Patience, young Jedi. We'll have a review ready for next issue.	🔥🔥🔥
GC	AUG	F-ZERO GX Vroom.	🔥🔥🔥
PS2/XB/GC	AUG	GLADIUS Not to be confused with Acclaim's <i>Gladiator</i> , we wonder who'd win that fight....	🔥🔥🔥
PS2/XB/GC	AUG	SOUL CALIBUR 2 Just...one...more...month...!	🔥🔥🔥
ALL	AUG	XIII The sequel? XIII-II, obviously.	🔥🔥
ALL	AUG	CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON Favorite GMR mode of transportation: flight by wire.	🔥🔥🔥
ALL	AUG	MADDEN 2004 This ain't no mere roster update—this year, you can actually design stadiums.	🔥🔥🔥
PS2	AUG	RPG MAKER 2 We want to make <i>GMR: The Game</i> , but Ziff won't fork over the \$30 mil.	🔥🔥
PS2	AUG	VIRTUA FIGHTER 4 EVOLUTION <i>Soul Calibur 2</i> and <i>VF4: Evo</i> for less than \$75? We likey.	🔥🔥🔥
PC	AUG	HOMEWORLD 2 Oh, won't you please take us home...yeah, yeah!	🔥🔥
PC	SEPT	HALO Even though it's been more than four years, we're still excited.	🔥🔥🔥
XB	SEPT	DEAD OR ALIVE: ONLINE We're about to find out if 3D fighting works online.	🔥🔥🔥
XB	SEPT	WWE RAW 2 We've constructed a steel cage around our cubicles. It's confining, yet safe!	🔥🔥

✈ DEPARTURES OUT NOW

SYSTEM	TITLE	GMR SCORE
XBOX	RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN: TIDES OF WAR The Xbox Live hit of the summer.	8 ¹⁰
PC	SHADOWBANE Earning group experience points makes teamwork fun.	8 ¹⁰
PS2	UNLIMITED SAGA Unlimited shiii...bad game.	3 ¹⁰
XB/PS2	X2: WOLVERINE'S REVENGE Declawed and neutered.	5 ¹⁰
PC	DAY OF DEFEAT It doesn't look pretty, but war is often ugly business.	8 ¹⁰
XB	PHANTASY STAR ONLINE Keyboard support is way cool, but you can't play offline without Live.	7 ¹⁰
PC	POSTAL 2 No.	0 ¹⁰
XB/PS2/GC	WAKEBOARDING UNLEASHED We didn't believe Doug's review at first. Turns out he was right.	9 ¹⁰
GC	WARIO WORLD A fun and quick romp through the wacky minds of Treasure.	7 ¹⁰
GC	TUBE SLIDER The instruction manual advises to "avoid sliding." Done and done.	5 ¹⁰
PS2	K-1 GRAND PRIX No, silly, it's not a racing game.	8 ¹⁰
PS2	RESIDENT EVIL: DEAD AIM It's like <i>Resident Evil</i> , but with guns and zombies. Er, wait....	5 ¹⁰
GC	ULTIMATE MUSCLE It might not have Method Man, but <i>Muscle</i> is stronger than <i>Def Jam</i> .	9 ¹⁰
PS2	CHAOS LEGION Make your minions do all the dirty work.	8 ¹⁰
GBA	ADVANCE WARS 2 Wouldn't it be weird if real war were turn-based? We think so.	8 ¹⁰
GBA	WARIO WARE, INC. Speaking of weird....	9 ¹⁰

More info at www.gamers.com



It's in the game.

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MADDEN2004.COM



Visit www.esrb.org or
call 1-800-771-3772
for Rating Information.

INFOMANIA!
THE LATEST ON...

SILENT HILL 3

Lord have mercy! Just as we were going to print, Konami slipped us a mickey. And when we woke up in a tub full of ice, we had a reviewable copy of *Silent Hill 3* taped to our faces. "Awesome!" said Milky, breaking through the assembled crowd and racing for the exit with the game. When we reconvene for next month's *GMR*, we'll give you the full scoop. Is *Silent Hill 3* the best of the bunch, or is it *Resident Evil's* lunch? We'll unlock the game's deepest, darkest secrets and show you some wicked cool bonuses too. Beef jerky! 🍖

XB

PC

PS2

GBA

GC

CLICKS

GO HERE NOW, PILGRIM



www.system16.com

An excellent, exhaustive resource for info on arcade hardware, this site includes information dating from the late 1970s to modern hardware like Sega's Chihiro board. Nearly anything you need to know about this format can be found here. 🍖

[TALENT]

* MICHIRU YAMANE

THE WOMAN BEHIND THE MUSIC THAT MOVES YOU

➔ When people think of the *Castlevania* series, most minds wind the clock back six years or so to long-standing PS1 classic *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* as their reference point—and with good reason. The game's awesome blend of classic *Castlevania* jump-hack-slash action, detailed next-generation graphics, and RPG elements (not to mention the "secret" upside-down castle) had hardcore gamers frothing at the mouth. But one crucial (and criminally overlooked) element that glues the whole experience together is *Symphony's* inspired soundtrack. A blend of baroque symphonics and modern techno sounds, its considered a videogame classic.

The creator of this legendary soundtrack is Michiru Yamane, a veteran Konami composer whose credits include *Gradius*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *Castlevania Bloodlines*, *Suikoden III*,

Winning Eleven 6, and many more. We asked where she got the chops to compose the mellifluous melodies that the *Castlevania* series demands. "I studied piano as a child, and in high school I took courses in music composition. I went to the No. 2 university in Japan for composing, where I completed my master's degree," she says. "When I started composing, I studied Johann Sebastian Bach, so I really analyzed music in order to create these soundtracks. I got the inspiration to compose when I was a child; getting the chance to do *Castlevania* provided the perfect fit for me."

While Yamane-san contributed only to the recent GBA *Castlevania* games, the upcoming soundtrack for *Lament of Innocence* on PS2 is her baby. Unlike previous iterations of the series, *Lament* updates the musical palette with "housier" sounds you might expect to hear in clubs, rather than dusty castles.



Yamane explains, "Using just classical styles of music wouldn't be appropriate for this generation. Something that's more up-tempo, that fits the action that's happening onscreen, is important. To create an amalgamation of music that's up-tempo, that drives you in the gameplay—in that action style—with that Gothic envelope around it is important for *Castlevania*." 🍖

DOG SHOW

PARAPPA COMING TO A TV NOWHERE NEAR YOU

JAPAN

➔ Japan's first attempt at a Parappa the Rapper animated TV series was a resounding failure, but that's not stopping studio Production IG (*Ghost in the Shell*, *Patlabor*) from having another go at it. With musical assistance from creator Masaya Matsuura, as well as original character designs by Rodney Greenblat, IG is set to produce 30 half-hour adventures in Parappa Town for the upcoming season on Fuji TV.

The style of the series seems more conventionally cute than the jarringly odd games. This is perhaps due to the influence of director Hiroaki Sakurai, who made his name and fortune with the mind-meltingly saccharine *Di Gi Charat* series. Get past the

disturbing visual comparison, though, and Sakurai's sense of humor might prove a good fit for the world of Parappa. *Di Gi Charat* at least had a little more edge than most of its painfully perky contemporaries.

Parappa will be played by Miyu Irino, the voice of Sora in the Japanese version of *Kingdom Hearts*. Meanwhile, anime geeks might pick up on the voices of PJ Berri and Sunny Funny—respectively, Masami Kikuchi (*Oh! My Goddess*' hero Keiichi) and Mika Kanai (Emi and Yumi from *Irresponsible Captain Tylor*). 🍖

_ Dave Smith

_ More info at www.productionig.com/parappa.html

[BLIPS]

3DOver

The war appears to be over: Army Men publisher 3DO has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection and has laid off a large portion of its staff. No word yet on what will become of the products still in development, but rumor has it there are already some interested parties.

ETM Sells a Million

Atari has announced that *Enter the Matrix* has sold a total of one million copies over four platforms since its mid-May release. While the game rides the initial wave of *Matrix Reloaded* fervor, it remains to be seen if it has stronger legs than the movie, which ruled the box office for a single week.

Acclaim CEO Steps Down

In other beleaguered developer news, Acclaim CEO and founder Greg Fischbach has resigned from his position at the struggling software company. Fischbach will be replaced by former chief operating officer of Acclaim International, Rodney Cousins, who will also supervise current development.

A NEW SEASON

UT'S BLOODSPORT COMPETITION BEGINS ANEW

U.S.A.

When Atari (nee Infogrames) announced its plan to go in a new sports-themed direction for *Unreal Tournament 2003* (sequel to *Unreal Tournament*), it promised that like other sports games, it would feature yearly installments. It's come through on that promise with the announcement of *Unreal Tournament 2004*, this year's futuristic blood-sport challenge for your PC.

Similar to your average sports games, *UT2004* offers the typical small graphical brushups and incremental adjustments—in fact, it uses the same graphics engine as *UT2003*. That's not really a bad thing when you consider *UT2003* still touts some of today's most cutting-edge visuals.

UT2004's big improvements are seen in actual gameplay with the addition of new maps and modes—such as Onslaught and the much-missed Assault mode from the original *UT*—but the most significant addition is something never seen in a *UT* game: vehicles. You'll be able to pilot and ride in land- and space-based craft in

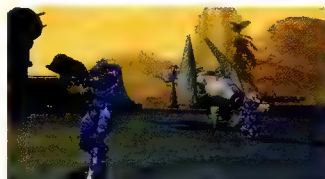


certain game types. Atari also threw in a slew of other improvements, including better bot A.I. and 3D positional chat (so you can hear where your buddies are coming from).

What this game will make you drop in your pants is unreal. **||**◀



More info at www.unrealtournament2004.com



FOUND!

GMR SCOURS THE GLOBE



LUPIN III: RC CAR

ORIGIN: JAPAN

Long-running anime/manga hero, *Lupin the 3rd*, is a debonair adventurer. Thanks to his recent appearance on the Cartoon Network's *Adult Swim* schedule, Lupin and friends are finding a new audience. As with all things anime, licensing and merchandising are never far behind. Which is why we're stoked we came across this little DigiQ-esque remote-controlled toy, featuring Lupin and his sidekick Jigen leaning out of the moonroof in this classic pose from the anime-classic *Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro*. **||**◀

WILL WRIGHT TV

SIMS' CREATOR EXPANDS TO TUBE

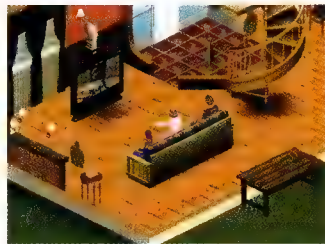
USA

Will Wright has already made a lasting impression with gamers, creating the best-selling PC franchise of all time, *The Sims*. Now he's taking on Hollywood with a new TV deal with Fox. The network that brought you *The Simpsons* has signed Wright to a deal for the development of original TV projects.

"There are a lot of things that we've learned in interactive entertainment that could help connect the loop between the viewer and the program in linear entertainment," explains Wright. "There are some interesting hybrids that are worth exploring and go beyond the viewer picking

up and calling in to cast a vote. With games, players like to have creative input into a franchise, and I think there are ways to do this with TV."

Wright says the key to making a successful TV show will be to hook the audience in the first five minutes and then explore themes that interest him, like the relationship between man and machine. *MY R.O.B.O.T.*, a blend of stop-motion puppetry and Japanese animation set in feudal Japan with American suburban story lines, is one of the show ideas Wright created. The other is a candid-camera-style show that puts a life-sized robot into everyday situations, like



serving customers in a restaurant, and records how people interact with machines.

"I'd like to start with a clean slate with Fox, but the theme of man's relationship with machines is very interesting," says Wright, who believes robots will become as ubiquitous as ATMs over the next two decades. **||**◀

John Gaudiosi

More info at www.reuters.com

CLICKS

GO HERE NOW. PILGRIM



www.vgmuseum.com

Nostalgia for videogames of our youth makes us feel good and incredibly old at the same time. The videogame museum is a great resource for screenshots and descriptions of our favorite games from childhood. **||**◀

[BLIPS]

This is a tribute...

Wonder Boy Jack Black is putting down his guitar and picking up a controller. The actor and frontman of Tenacious D is set to star in the upcoming movie *Rad Brad*, *Modern Warrior* as the world's greatest videogame player, who's been recruited to save the world. Yes, it is a comedy.

Xbox Japan woes

Word out of Japan is that Microsoft's Japanese Xbox division recently laid off 34 of its 36 employees. Ouch. Calling Xbox's sales numbers in Japan "dismal" is like calling tentacle porn "sick." As in very. Is Microsoft's console on even shakier ground in the land of the rising sun?

Nintendo Plummet

In reporting last fiscal year's financial results, Nintendo announced a staggering 37 percent drop in profits. It's not all bad news, though. Over the period, software sales were up a bit, and the GBA has sold 33.8 million units since its launch. GBA SP sales figures aren't back yet, but they're expected to be good.

GMR CHARTS

THE TOP-SELLING GAMES FOR EVERY SYSTEM FOR MAY

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

EB GAMES
electronics boutiqueSAM'S
CLUBSPLINTER
CELL IS BACK

CANADA

TOP 10 ALL FORMATS

RANK	TITLE	FORMAT	SCORE
01	 ENTER THE MATRIX This makes us really sad.	PS2	4
02	 ENTER THE MATRIX This makes us really, really sad.	XB	4
03	 BRUTE FORCE There's no "I" in team. Apparently, there's not much "fun," either.	XB	6
04	 RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN: TIDES OF WAR Nazis and zombies. Do you really need anything else?	XB	8
05	 NBA STREET VOL. 2 What's up with Kobe crying after getting ousted by the Spurs? We cry only if we get beat by Nelly.	PS2	9
06	 ENTER THE MATRIX Seriously, we're about to slit our wrists over here.	GC	4
07	 THE SIMS: SUPERSTAR You can finally live your dreams of being the next J. Lo. Ass padding not included.	PC	TBD
08	 NBA STREET VOL. 2 Big ups to all the Xbizzle plays! Dude, we are so street!	XB	9
09	 PLANETSIDE It's like Halo online and on the PC. You know, how Halo was originally supposed to be.	PC	TBD
10	 CASTLEVANIA: ARIA OF SORROW Turn that frown upside down, Konami! Sorrow is sitting happy in the top 10.	GBA	8

PS2 TOP 10

01	ENTER THE MATRIX	4
02	NBA STREET VOL. 2	9
03	DOT HACK 2: MUTATION	8
04	SPLINTER CELL	8
05	MIDNIGHT CLUB 0	8
06	THE HULK	6
07	X2: WOLVERINE'S REVENGE	5
08	DYNASTY WARRIORS 4	6
09	DEEP JAM VENDETTA	7
10	RTCW: OPERATION RESURRECTION	TBD

XBOX TOP 10

01	ENTER THE MATRIX	4
02	BRUTE FORCE	6
03	RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN: TIDES OF WAR	8
04	NBA STREET VOL. 2	9
05	MOTO GP 2	9
06	THE HULK	6
07	HALO	10
08	BURNOUT 2	8
09	INSIDE PITCH 2003	5
10	X2: WOLVERINE'S REVENGE	5

PC TOP 10

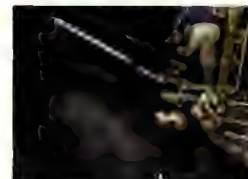
01	THE SIMS: SUPERSTAR	TBD
02	PLANETSIDE	TBD
03	GTA: VICE CITY	TBD
04	ENTER THE MATRIX	4
05	RISE OF NATIONS	8
06	THE HULK	6
07	EVE ONLINE	TBD
08	BLITZKRIEG	TBD
09	MTW: VIKING INVASION	8
10	BF 1942	9

GBA TOP 10

01	CASTLEVANIA: ARIA OF SORROW	8
02	YU-GI-OH! WORLD	6
03	POKEMON RUBY	7
04	POKEMON SAPHIRE	7
05	GOLDEN SUN 2	8
06	WARIO WARE	9
07	DBZ: LEGACY OF GOKU	6
08	LEGEND OF ZELDA	9
09	LUFIA	8
10	METROID FUSION	9

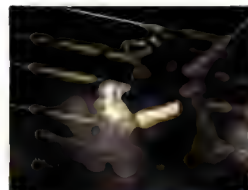
GC TOP 10

01	ENTER THE MATRIX	4
02	LOZ: THE WIND WAKER	9
03	NBA STREET VOL. 2	9
04	IKARUGA	7
05	THE HULK	6
06	SPLINTER CELL	9
07	MARIO PARTY 4	8
08	BURNOUT 2	8
09	LOST KINGDOMS 2	5
10	FINDING NEMO	TBD



Sam Fisher has some unfinished business. The virtual star of Ubi Soft's megasuccessful stealth shooter *Splinter Cell* will be returning to action in *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow*, due out for Xbox (and certainly other systems) in early 2004.

Details were a bit sketchy as of press time, but we can give you a few tidbits. For one, *Pandora Tomorrow* is a full-fledged sequel (not a tweener game) that's not much more than the original with more levels. Second, *Pandora Tomorrow* lets gamers compete against each other in online multiplayer modes. It's an intriguing concept for a stealth-action-type game, and one we will bring you more details on once they become available.



More info at www.ubisoft.com

NO STRINGS

CONTROLLERS FOR THE COUCH-BOUND

TECH

Ten feet between you and your TV just isn't enough. You'll either yank your PS2 to the floor or need to reach the couch—or, if you're like us, you've got a short fuse and you'll chuck the controller out the damn window if you get killed **ONE MORE FRIGGIN' TIME!** (Ahem.) That's why you need a wireless controller.

FOUNTECH AIRSTYLE

Many third-party gamepads feel like junk in your hands. Not the AirStyle, though. In fact, this sucker is built Tonka-tough and could probably double as a blackjack if you plan on mugging someone with a wireless controller. Although it transmits at only 900MHz, it seemed to work well enough on demos. There is also a power-saving Eco mode that lets you prolong the battery life. Good if you play RPGs, bad if you're playing games that require lightning-fast responses. You see, in order to save battery power, it transmits your button presses slower, leading to onscreen lag.

More info at www.fountech.com



PELICAN ACCESSORIES G3 WIRELESS

Nintendo's WaveBird has pretty much set the standard when it comes to wireless gamepads. It's built like a '67 Chevy and can run off a couple of batteries for hours. The only thing that's missing from the equation: rumble support. Hey, you can't get everything in one package, right? Wrong. Pelican Accessories' chunky G3 Wireless controller is attempting to pack it all in under the hood. First, it promises more than 120 hours of playtime with Rumble support on—and more than 200 hours with the Rumble support turned off. Another nice nod to Nintendo is that the G3 is also WaveBird compatible—it uses the same frequencies.

More info at www.pelicanacc.com



NYKO WIRELESS AIR FLO

Sweaty-palmed freaks take note: Stop playing for five minutes and go outside. If bright light scares you, though, Nyko's Wireless Air Flo is your other option. It's a fairly comfortable controller with rubberized handgrips, and in that respect alone, we'll give it some props. The Air Flo's also got lotsa holes and a fan in it, and it blows air on your hands—perfect for those long, lonely nights. Will it make that big of a difference to you? That depends on your greasy mitts. While we haven't given this guy a full test run, Nyko is promising you about 20 hours of playtime between batteries.

More info at www.nyko.com



LOGITECH CORDLESS CONTROLLER FOR XBOX

The standard-issue Xbox controller is probably the most forging of all the consoles. You've got plenty of cable length and even a breakaway cable for all you klutzes out there. Still, that meaty gamepad is a handful. For a couple of months now, Logitech has been selling a handy replacement: the Logitech Cordless Controller. Solidly built with well-spaced-out buttons, it even has good Force Feedback—not something often done right in a wireless pad. On top of that, it transmits at 2.4GHz. What the hell does that mean? It means that if you can see your TV from 50 feet away, you'll still be able to use this gamepad.

More info at www.logitech.com



[BLIPS]

Street Fighter turns 15

Believe it or not, Capcom's *Street Fighter* was released 15 years ago. That makes the Pfist feel kind of old. Capcom has created a website to celebrate this certifiable arcade classic at www.capcom.co.jp/sf15th. The site is almost completely in Japanese, but you'll get the gist.

More games to movies

The Uwe Boll-directed *House of the Dead* movie, which has sat in limbo for some time, will finally be getting a wide theatrical release, thanks to Artisan Entertainment. Next up for the German-born Boll is a cinematic take on the classic *Alone in the Dark* game franchise.

Games = Free Speech

It's official: In what could turn out to be a landmark ruling, the 8th District U.S. Court of Appeals has ruled that videogames are protected by the first amendment. Overturning an earlier ruling, the judgement is expected to help another case against censorship in Washington State.

GAMEPLANNER | JULY 2003

WE'VE GOT THE CURE FOR THE SUMMERTIME BLUES

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

06

In The Comoros (an archipelago between Madagascar and the African continent), they have 6th of July parades. Or so we assume.

07

Charlie's Angels struts on to PS2, Xbox, and GameCube today.

08

Top Angler 2 from Capcom is released for GameCube. Heeeeere, fishy fishy fishy....

09

A trio of PS2 releases: *Fugitive Hunter*, *Silent Line: Armored Core*, and *Space Channel 5 Part 2*. Go on. Shake that moneymaker. It's OK.

10

Punch your friends in the eye: Konami's *K-1 Grand Prix* for PS2 is now available.

11

Sean Connery leads *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* on to the big screen. Could the comic book film be destined for extraordinary box office receipts?

12

The people of Newfoundland, Canada, celebrate General Holiday today. Sounds to us like an excuse to not deliver the mail.

13

Han Solo-turned-Indiana Jones-turned-guy-in-Six Days Seven Nights actor Harrison Ford is 62 today. Also old: *Star Trek* and X-Men icon Patrick Stewart is 63.

15

Want to buy some games today? How 'bout *Freestyle Metal X* (PS2, Xbox, GC), *Breed* (PC), and *Pirates of the Caribbean* (PC)?

16

LucasArts drops some product: *Indiana Jones* for PS2 and *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* for Xbox.

18

U-rah-rah! EA's *NCAA Football 2004* is released for all platforms, unfortunately sans drunken-student-riot simulator. There's always next year.

19

20

21

22

23

Downhill Domination for PS2 barrels into your home and makes a mess of your living room. That's what you get for living at the bottom of a hill.

25

Angelina Jolie reprises her role as the buxom Brit Lara Croft in the second *Tomb Raider* movie: *The Cradle of Life*.

26

Rock 'n' roll can never die: Rolling Stones frontman Mick Jagger turns 60 years old. That's only six decades of rock, but we like it.

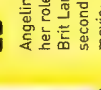
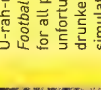
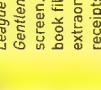
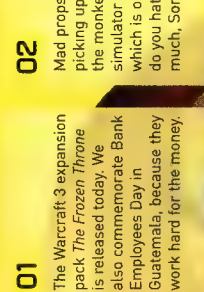
28

The U.S. Virgin Islands observes Hurricane Supplication Day, when they pray for safety during the storm season. Good luck, kids.

30

Acclaim's much improved futuristic racing franchise sees its fourth installment: XGRA. Pick it up for your system of choice.

31



IN SPACE, OR ON LAND, I WILL HUNT THEM DOWN.

MACE GRIFFIN BOUNTY HUNTER



I used to command the Galactic Rangers. We uncovered a conspiracy that threatened to destroy the entire frontier. The corporations turned the galaxy into a battlefield. They murdered my squad. I was framed and spent ten long years in prison. Now I'm out. As a bounty hunter, I travel the galaxy bringing down criminals for cash. But the only thing I'm after... is revenge.



BLOOD and GORE
VIOLENCE

PlayStation 2



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[illegible]

BONKI!

OUR FAVORITE CAVEMAN (INCLUDING RINGO STARR) RETURNS

● JAPAN

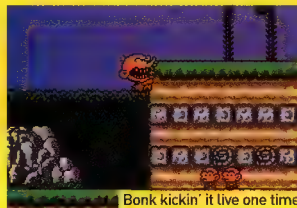
➡ *PC Genjin*, the punny prehistoric side-scroller known in America as *Bonk's Adventure*, is making a surprising return on GameCube. Some time ago, Hudson announced it was bringing the classics *Lode Runner* and *Star Soldier* to Nintendo's system, reviving them as part of a budget re-release series. Now, the series is growing from two titles to six; alongside those two, Hudson is bringing out the original *Bonk's Adventure* and the first 8-bit *Adventure Island*.

That leaves two slots yet to be filled by other 8-bit action games, but Hudson has been slow to release details on the revivals. Neither *Bonk* nor *Adventure Island* has a Japanese release date as yet, only a price: 3,000 yen (about \$22), the same as Hudson's other budget titles.

Today's generation of gamers has probably never heard of Bonk or Master Higgins (*Adventure Island's* hero), but both starred in some brilliant side-scrollers in their time. Caveboy Bonk head-bashed his way through three ace adventures on TurboGrafx-16 and managed to spawn a sci-fi successor, the cyborg shooter *Super Air Zonk*. Sadly, even his inimitable style (created by the talented designers of Red Entertainment) wasn't enough to counteract NEC's boneheaded marketing, which is why most of you are probably saying "TurboGrafx-huh?" right now. 🖱️



→ *Bonk's Adventure* is a pretty literal gag—he bonks stuff with his head, get it? The Japanese title was far more clever in comparison. *PC Genjin* is a play on “PC-Engine” (Turbografx-16’s Japanese name), and “genjin” happens to be Japanese for “caveman.” Ha ha ha! Um.



Bonk kickin' it live one time




SEGA CEO MERRY-GO-ROUND

SATO OUT, OGUCHI IN

➡ When a multibillion-dollar merger falls apart, heads roll. And so it proved at Sega when President Hideki Sato stepped down and was replaced by Hitmaker's Hisao Oguchi. Sega also reorganized its management structure to abolish the positions of chief operating officer and representative director, handing all the power to incoming president Oguchi.

Oguchi previously held the post of senior officer at Sega, managing the output of the company's vaunted 10 development studios. His own studio, Hitmaker, may not have the glitz of instant recognition that Sonic Team and AM2 command, but with solid and profitable hits like *Crazy Taxi* under his belt, Oguchi had been a prime

candidate for Sega's future chief for a while. Similar to Nintendo's appointment of Satoru Iwata, Oguchi is still relatively young at 43 and has hands-on game-making experience under his belt.

The news comes amid the first collapse of the proposed merger with Sammy, and then Namco tiring of Sega playing hard to get, and then an apparent change of heart from Sega's parent company, CSK, which pushed for the Sammy deal so it could off-load Sega shares. Indeed, Oguchi now says Sega can turn around on its own. The management cull in Japan also came as Sega of America Vice President Charles Bellfield followed Peter Moore out the door to take an as-yet-unknown position elsewhere in the industry. 



Oguchi in.



Sato out.

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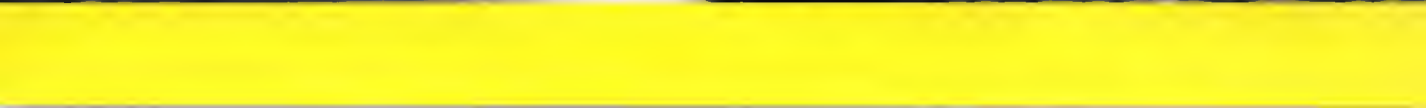
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NEXT

INCOMING GAMES PREVIEWED

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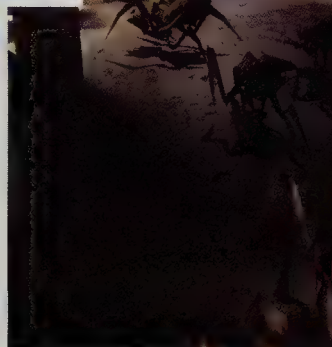
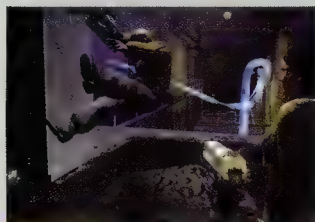
WARNING!

HAZARDOUS MATERIAL

Here at *GMR*, we preview games a little differently. To ensure that our previews are as relevant as possible, we feature only titles that will be released within six months. We also record our level of excitement about the game with cool little flames. Previews are not reviews—they're merely a guide as to how good a game-in-progress is looking. It's a snapshot. If we're not very excited by it, the game gets one or two flames. If we're taking a wait-and-see attitude, expect to see three flames. Over and above that, you can bet we're pretty excited. It's our duty to tell you what we think at every stage of a game's development cycle—positive, negative, or somewhere in between.



→ *Half-Life 2*'s alien design is of the big insect variety, even down to such vehicles as the spiderlike striders (above) and the creepy crawly antlions (right). Of course, you'll fight human opponents too, but they lack that intrinsic "ickiness," don't they?



RELEASE | SEPTEMBER

HALF-LIFE 2

SYSTEM: PC PUBLISHER: VIVENDI UNIVERSAL DEVELOPER: VALVE

TIME TO SAVE THE WORLD AGAIN, MR. FREEMAN

➔ After being surprise-announced in April, demonstrated for the first time to the public at E3, and slated for a September release, the sequel to perhaps the greatest PC game of all time has gone from zero to a million on the hype-o-meter in, like, no seconds. Not only is *Half-Life 2* this year's biggest PC title (sorry, *Doom III*), it could mark a significant revolution for the medium—from the technology to the gameplay to the storytelling. Not excited? Get ready to be...

If you know nothing about *Half-Life*, here's a quick synopsis: It's a groundbreaking first-person shooter that puts you in the lab coat of a mild-

mannered scientist working at a top-secret government research laboratory where an experiment goes wrong—terribly, terribly wrong—and the next thing you know, you're fighting your way out of the facility past marauding aliens and well-armed paramilitary "cleaners." *Half-Life 2* picks up where *Half-Life* left off, with the aliens now here in full force and taking over the earth. You are Gordon Freeman: paramilitary "cleaner," all-around badass, and you're leading a small band of armed resistance against the Combine, who outnumber and outgun you at every corner.

The look of the alien units will be somewhat familiar to fans of the first

game, but very original, too. The aliens of *Half-Life* were merely the tip of the iceberg, an advance party if you will. In *Half-Life 2*, they bring out the big guns, which are not only deadly, but damn cool-looking, too. The TK looks like some sort of alien attack-helicopter as envisioned by Jacques Cousteau, and the spindly Striders are something right out of *War of the Worlds*. The entire aesthetic, from the creature design to the wasteland environments, is like nothing you've ever seen.

Of course, *Half-Life 2*'s look has a lot to do with Valve's new proprietary graphics engine, called Source, which has already been licensed for use in

other games, including *Vampire: The Masquerade—Bloodlines*. A lot of the new technologies developed by the major 3D-processor makers are being utilized in *Half-Life 2*, although minimum system requirements to run the game should remain fairly modest. The advanced graphics really show up in the details, like character faces that show subtle emotions and lighting tricks that make the world believable and add greatly to that whole suspension of disbelief thing.

The Source engine also does some pretty amazing things on the physics side. Being immersed in a virtual world is about more than having things

PC



look real; objects have to act realistically, too. Things that you expect to be destructible are, and materials react properly to their environments. Using your surroundings is crucial. Even if you're overmatched in a firefight, there will be ways to succeed—for example, by making stuff fall on enemies. Put another way, guns blazing won't always be the best strategy.

Ah yes, guns. It wouldn't be a first-person shooter without guns. In addition to the standard machine-gun and rocket-launcher loadouts, you'll have access to some weird cutting-edge stuff as well, like an energy beam that lets you pick up objects and fling them around and a pheromone bomb that gives you control over a pack of

alien antlions who will attack your enemies voraciously. You'll also be able to take control of vehicles, something you couldn't do in *Half-Life* (with the exception of service trams).

Half-Life is action-packed and crams a lot of variety into a compelling story line. Considering that Valve has been working on this sequel since it finished *Half-Life* in 1998, we expect this sequel to have just as compelling story as it's predecessor. Add to that the amazing technology upon which *Half-Life 2* is built, graphically and otherwise, and suddenly it's clear why this is going to be one of 2003's don't-miss titles. **LE**

GMA SAYS → The anticipation is eating our face like a head crab

→ HOW HOT... 🔥🔥🔥🔥

FACE TIME



➔ The complex facial-animation technology in *Half-Life 2* is a lot more than a neat graphics trick that won't have any effect on what happens in the game. Valve actually went to the trouble of consulting psychologists about how facial expressions reflect emotional states, so it could create a system that dynamically shows a character's state of mind. It might seem minor, but when you see fear or worry on your sidekick's face or the evil sneer of the G-Man and realize that the lip-syncing is perfect, even in other languages, you'll get that whole immersion thing everyone talks about. **LE**

INCOMING GAMES

castlevania lament of innocence → the great escape

RELEASE | NOVEMBER

CASTLEVANIA: LAMENT OF INNOCENCE

SYSTEM PS2 PUBLISHER KONAMI DEVELOPER KONAMI COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT TOKYO

FANG-SHUI. IN 3D

➔ Beating up vampires has always been a popular pastime. Since most people prefer their necks without holes, bloodsuckers have always been in a bad spot. Take Dracula, for instance—not a hit at parties. And so with every recent appearance of Mr. D, a Belmont (or a bastard son) has always been waiting in the wings to whip his ass. And now, after nearly six years and a handful of handheld adventures, Konami and *Symphony of the Night* Director Koji Igarashi are ready to show you how it all started.

Set in the 11th century, *Lament of Innocence* introduces Leon Belmont, the first in the yet-to-be famous vampire-hunting family. Dracula has made off with his woman, Sara, and without knowing what he's getting into, Leon heads off to save the day, acquiring a whip from a friendly alchemist. *Lament* offers the same monster-slaying action the series is known for while properly bringing it into 3D (sorry kiddies, but those crap N64 games don't count).

If you're one of the old-school hardcore gamers wondering if the series would ever hit PS2 in 2D,

Igarashi told us, "We did think about looking at the 2D angle; however, it is a bit difficult with the PS2 hardware. Because it's so graphically powerful, you have to make a 2D game a lot more detailed. Also, 2D for PS2 seems to be the hardcore market, so while it may get the critical acclaim, the sales won't add up. And while there was a former 3D *Castlevania*, I'd like you to forget about it and think of this as the first real 3D *Castlevania*."

Longtime fans might, er, lament the removal of *Symphony's* RPG elements, but you'll be able to customize Leon with various subweapons, armor, and relics (supernatural attachments the alchemist augments so Leon's human form can utilize them). While the whip is Leon's only primary weapon (he doesn't pick up Excalibur anytime soon), he can upgrade it with various powers, turning it into an extremely destructive tool. Due out later this year, *Lament of Innocence* will be, in Igarashi's words, the best *Castlevania* ever. We're dying to put that notion to the test. ☞

GMA SAYS → It's about time, baby. We can hardly wait to sink our teeth into this one.

➔ HOW HOT... 🔥🔥🔥🔥



← Boss-fighting is a standard practice in most action games, but bosses are rarely pushovers, which makes the use of Magic Orbs especially helpful. Combining *Castlevania* staple weapons like holy water or crosses with a red, blue, yellow, green, white, black, or purple orb causes each subweapon to unleash new effects. There are 35 possible combinations.

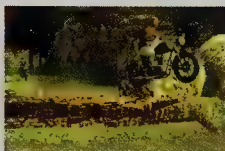


THE GREAT ESCAPE

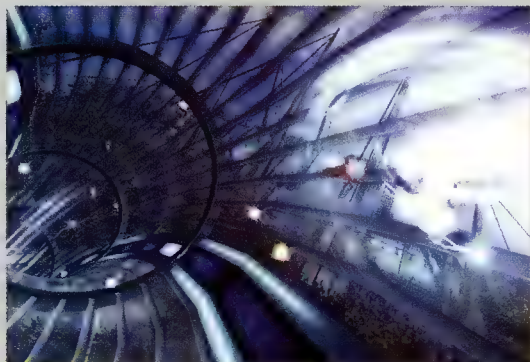
SYSTEM PC, PS2, XB PUBLISHER GOTHAM GAMES DEVELOPER PIVOTAL

Previously at the spiritual wheel of Infogrames' *Driver*, Steve McQueen now lends his self-assured countenance (albeit posthumously) to *The Great Escape*, based on the 1963 hit film of the same name. By appearances a refreshingly cerebral re-creation of the movie, Gotham Games' latest follows an international array of multitasked POWs as they attempt to break free from a Nazi prison camp.

RELEASE | JULY



➔ HOW HOT... 🔥🔥🔥



RELEASE | AUGUST

F-ZERO GX

□ SYSTEM: GC □ PUBLISHER: NINTENDO □ DEVELOPER: AMUSEMENT VISION

VOMIT COMET

➔ As Lt. Pete Mitchell eloquently demonstrated in the modern cinematic, "classic" *Top Gun*, inside each and every one of us lies an intense emotional and physical desire to travel from one place to another with great haste. This has since been dubbed by the medical community "the need for speed," and if left unchecked, it poses major problems for the human psyche. Fortunately for those of us who are not pilots in the U.S. Navy, Nintendo has a cure.

F-Zero GX is the collaborative result of Sega's Amusement Vision development team (*Daytona USA*, *Super Monkey Ball*) and Nintendo's ever-present and license-protective guidance. Aside from a graphical steroid injection, Amusement Vision has messed with the *F-Zero* recipe very little. *GX* plays largely like *N64's F-Zero X*. Along with the standard Grand Prix, Vs., and Time Attack modes, there's a new Story mode that has famed pilot Capt. Falcon completing various mission-based races. And while the GBA isn't involved in any fashion whatsoever, *F-Zero GX* features connectivity of a different sort. Assuming you can find a sit-down arcade cabinet (Nintendo has yet to say much about distribution), you can take your memory card full of pilots and custom ship parts and transfer them into the machine. You can also take custom data from the arcade version back home for use in your GameCube.

GMR took *F-Zero GX* for a quick spin at E3, and its speed was almost too much to handle. Everything about the game is impressive, from the faithful re-creation of *F-Zero* gameplay to the wide array of graphical effects and rock-solid framerate. It seems that Amusement Vision has done its homework. Hopefully, this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship. ☛

GMR SAYS → We feel the need. The need (high-five!) for speed.

→ HOW HOT...



RELEASE | AUGUST

RPG MAKER 2

□ SYSTEM: PS2 □ PUBLISHER: AGETEC
□ DEVELOPER: ENTERBRAIN

BREWING YOUR OWN

➔ Who are the foretold heroes of legend? What tragic secret haunts the heroine's past? Why does the number of monsters keep increasing? In *RPG Maker 2*, the tangled web is yours to weave.

More a set of tools than an actual game, the first *Maker* has given PlayStation visionaries the means to create their own turn-based RPGs—battles, dungeons, and everything else included. The complexity can be daunting, but thousands of RPG auteurs have taken up the challenge and formed a sizeable community that's still active today.

The basic idea is still the same, but the next generation of world-creating, script-writing demigods have a powerful new force to reckon with: the third dimension. To the dismay of 2D diehards, sprites yield to

polygons, meaning less control over characters' appearance and animation, as well as more-detailed map creation and the ability to view battles from different angles.

USB keyboard support allows for easier text input, and a Beginner mode lets you drag and drop your way to a short, simple RPG. As a bonus, a finished title is included in the package to entertain and inspire, giving players an idea of what's possible. ☛

GMR SAYS → High stats for determination, patience, and a little creativity are a requirement for entry.

→ HOW HOT...



RELEASE | AUGUST

MADDEN NFL 2004

□ SYSTEM: GBA, GC, PC, PS2, XBOX □ PUBLISHER: EA
□ DEVELOPER: EA TIBURON

PIGSKIN PARADISE

➔ Previewing the next *Madden* title is like previewing Christmas: You know what to expect, but you still get excited. In its storied 14-year history, the *Madden* series has had its ups and downs. Some years, the models are clunky and weird but the passing game is right on; others, the models look great but the running game feels muddy. From what we can tell, '04 should be one of those good years.

Those familiar with the series will recognize old favorites like the Franchise mode—you can now manage assistant coaches while you build your own coaching staff, and can even send players to minicamp. You'll also get commentary by John Madden and Al Michaels, and online competition (PS2 and PC only). And, those who would rather

just play will like the game's new look and updated character models, which far outshine their predecessors.

Gameplay in '04 feels more balanced than in earlier versions. The running game is still the key to success, but expect average ball carriers to bust out for 40 yards. And even though the passing game boasts a learning curve, it is possible to figure it out. Looks like a great game so far; we can't wait to play a little more. ☛

GMR SAYS → No Xbox Live support? For shame.

→ HOW HOT...



FINAL FANTASY: TACTICS ADVANCE

□ SYSTEM: GBA □ PUBLISHER: NINTENDO □ DEVELOPER: SQUARE ENIX

When its existence was first revealed to the world, many worried that *Final Fantasy: Tactics Advance* would be a port of the original PlayStation strategy RPG. Not like that would have been necessarily bad, but we were relieved to discover that the GBA version of *Tactics Advance* is a brand new game with new characters, story, spells, and summons. And that makes us all warm inside.

RELEASE | SEPTEMBER



→ HOW HOT...



RELEASE | SEPTEMBER

VIEWTIFUL JOE

SYSTEM GC PUBLISHER CAPCOM DEVELOPER CAPCOM

MAN IN TIGHTS

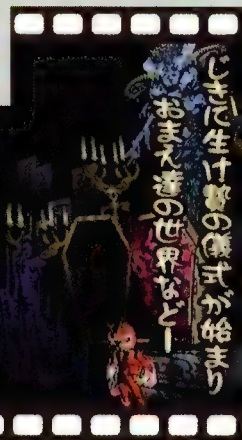
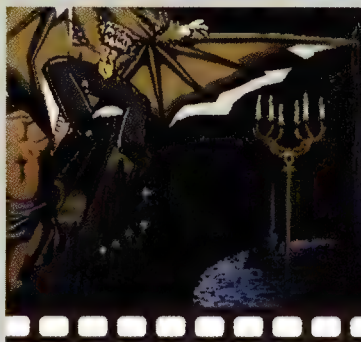
➔ The “comic book come to life” assessment is a bit cliché, granted. But we’re hard-pressed to find a better way of describing *Viewtiful Joe*, Capcom’s gritty new 2D beat-em-up that evokes fond punch-and-kick memories of the 16-bit era.

The first stage features plain ol’ regular Joe beating up on some fools and then encountering a mysterious old man who unlocks Joe’s inner hero. By saying the magical word “henshin” (he takes a few liberties with the delivery), Joe makes himself viewtiful and equips himself with the nifty superhero ability to slow down or speed up time. The former will come in handy when dealing with enemies and bosses who are just too fast to get a

lock on—break out the slow motion and they’ll be much easier to deal with. Or, you could just as easily kick it into overdrive and take out a group of baddies in mere seconds. Loyal *GMR* readers might remember seeing *Viewtiful Joe* listed as No. 45 in our “Monster Games of 2003” (*GMR* #1) feature. Based on what we’ve played so far, we may have to bump that up a few notches. Controls are intuitive, and the art design is, as the kids say, “off the hook.” Punching bullets in slow-mo back at the jerk who’s trying to cap you? Simply viewtiful. 🔥

GMA SAYS ➔ To hell with three dimensions—2D a-go-go, baby

➔ HOW HOT... 🔥🔥🔥



RELEASE | SEPTEMBER

PAINKILLER

SYSTEM PC PUBLISHER DREAMCATCHER DEVELOPER PEOPLE CAN FLY

WHEN ASPIRIN JUST WON'T DO...

➔ Bearing all the subtlety of Judge Dredd, DreamCatcher's *Painkiller* is a trigger-happy quick-fix FPS with one foot in the grave. The story—in which a mercenary faces off against the minions of hell—has as much value as so many spent shells, but intensity is the key here, and *Painkiller*'s narrow focus should maintain it.

Based off of the Havok 2.0 engine, death and destruction, not to mention water and volumetric fog, are illuminated statically, dynamically, and in considerable detail. The inclusion of (gamers' darling) inverse kinematics suggests that corpses (made up of 3,000-4,000 polygons) will fly through the air with unerring (and unnerving)

realism. In fact, all objects—both inanimate and undead—should explode, crumple, and combust appropriately. Which, in some circles, is a really huge deal.

The development team includes several *Quake* champions, so expect some well-manicured multiplayer melees. The whole thing has a “back to basics” feel—the developers even made a point of avoiding weapon overload—in the best of ways. Shoot, strafe, and shoot a little more—it's a solid formula, why not make it work again? 🔥

GMA SAYS ➔ DreamCatcher says: “Shoot everything that moves. And if it isn't moving, shoot it just in case!” Clearly, the company has a bead on its audience and its tastes.

➔ HOW HOT... 🔥🔥🔥

GLADIATOR: SWORD OF VENGEANCE

SYSTEM PC, PS2, XBOX PUBLISHER ACCLAIM DEVELOPER ACCLAIM MANCHESTER

Gladiator's E3 showing left us duly impressed, with visuals far better than those in previous builds. This game makes no pretense of being overly ambitious—this is hack-n-slash action of the purest, most gruesome sort. That said, there's plenty of rich source material, including an array of grisly weapons, exotic battle locales rife with traps, and that gloriously gritty Greco-Roman charm.

➔ RELEASE | SEPTEMBER



XB

PC

PS2

GC

RELEASE | SEPTEMBER

WWE RAW 2: RUTHLESS AGGRESSION

□ SYSTEM XBOX □ PUBLISHER THQ □ DEVELOPER ANCHOR

THE SMACKDOWN COMETH. SUCKER

➔ Because it rightly wouldn't be a preview for a wrestling game without a series of nonsensical catchphrases tossed about, we do indeed smell what The Rock is cooking and have no earthly idea what we're going to do when the 24-inch pythons and Hulkamania run wild on us.

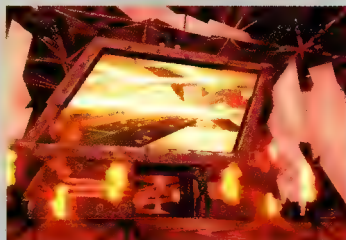
Jibberish aside, Xbox's *WWE Raw 2: Ruthless Aggression* promises to right the wrongs of the highly lackluster original *Raw*. This time, there are specialty matches such as Hell in the Cell, referees who can be beaten up, backstage areas, and a four-player Career mode. Developer Anchor has taken great pains to make the wrestlers move as real humans would, instead of like the robots with steel

poles seemingly inserted into their rectums that ran wild in the first *Raw*.

A roster of more than 60 sweaty brawlers will be included, and players can expect such WWE mainstays as Hulk Hogan, The Undertaker, The Rock, Stone Cold Steve Austin, and Brock Lesnar. Players can opt to create their own spandex warrior, too, and give him or her unique entrance music by ripping songs from any CD. Highly anticipated, *Raw 2* may well be Xbox's first wrestling game to challenge PlayStation 2's venerable *Smackdown* series. Here's hoping. **LE**

GMA SAYS → We hope WWE co-CEO Linda McMahon gets it—with a steel chair, that is.

➔ **HOW HOT...** 



XB

RELEASE | OCTOBER

RISE TO HONOR

□ SYSTEM PS2 □ PUBLISHER SCEA □ DEVELOPER SCEA FOSTER CITY STUDIO

FIGHT YOUR OWN DAMN BATTLES

➔ Historically, games featuring real martial artists haven't done well with American gamers: Both the Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan games were disappointments, and Steven Seagal's long-delayed title was canned before release. That hasn't stopped Sony from recruiting action star Jet Li, who's lending his face, voice, and motion-captured fighting skills to *Rise to Honor*, a new PlayStation 2 beat-em-up.

It's hard to make a really compelling brawler these days, but Sony is trying. With an innovative dual-joystick control system that enables you to walk in one direction while punching in another, plus thousands of moves derived from years of Hong Kong action

films, *Rise to Honor* is a few steps beyond typical 3D *Final Fight* clones. It may even deliver enough tricks, such as gunplay and time-slowing elements paralleling *Max Payne*, to win over skeptical gamers. Choreography and music developed by Hong Kong movie makers should help, too.

Admittedly, an E3 showing displayed animation that wasn't as smooth as we'd expect from a game that emphasizes the realism of its motion. Still, it's been years since a truly excellent brawling game hit the streets. *Rise to Honor* could be the one, but it's still too early to call. **LE**

GMA SAYS → We loves us a good brawl.

➔ **HOW HOT...** 




BREAKDOWN

□ SYSTEM XBOX □ PUBLISHER NAMCO □ DEVELOPER NAMCO

Boasting "the best elements of shooters and fighters," *Breakdown*'s E3 presence was, sadly, limited to video. Still, we're intrigued. While the perspective is first person, the focus is fully on the fistcuffs, and gunplay, puzzle solving, zombies, and sci-fi high jinks of the most outrageous order should keep the action fresh. We have no idea how it plays, but at the least it should look damn good.

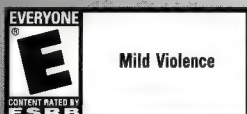
RELEASE | WINTER



➔ **HOW HOT...** 



Roll out the heavy artillery.



Mobilize your ground force over all-new terrain, mount a massive aerial assault against new enemies and coordinate a campaign designed to shock your enemy.

You are the commanding officer. Let the relentless bombardment begin.



RELEASE | OCTOBER

KIRBY'S AIR RIDE

□ SYSTEM: GC □ PUBLISHER: NINTENDO □ DEVELOPER: HAL LABORATORIES

HOT? OR HOT AIR?

➔ Originally an N64 game, *Kirby's Air Ride* is a surefire contender for "game with the longest development cycle for the least ambitious game design." Under the direction of HAL Laboratories (the team behind *Super Smash Bros. Melee*), the cutesy hover racer is being reworked for GC and is headed home in time for the holidays.

As much as we love the puffy pink cloud, our short time at E3 with Kirby's GC outing left us unfulfilled. Located just a few kiosks from *F-Zero GX*, *Kirby's Air Ride* was hard to take seriously. Its visuals are disappointingly mediocre, featuring bland and utterly uninspired track designs.

Generally, the E3 demo's controls felt far too loose for our liking. Plus,

controlling Kirby is confusing at first—there's no acceleration button.

Outside the option to inhale a Link power-up, we were hard pressed to find any palpable excitement in *Kirby's Air Ride*. Here's hoping the final product is more compelling. **LE**

GMA SAYS ➔ It's surprising how little the game has changed since it was announced.

➔ **HOW HOT...** 🔥 🔥 🔥



RELEASE | OCTOBER

PIKMIN 2

□ SYSTEM: GC □ PUBLISHER: NINTENDO □ DEVELOPER: NINTENDO

ONCE MORE IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN

➔ Captain Olimar is no Captain Kirk. Heck, he's not even Captain Kangaroo. Still, he has a few things those other pikers could only dream of: command of an army of plant creatures called Pikmin and starring roles in two of the most endearingly odd videogames ever made.

Pikmin 2, sequel to the offbeat *Pikmin*, delivered some absolutely enjoyable gameplay at this year's E3. The addition of Olimar's assistant to the mix means the game can be played cooperatively or competitively in splitscreen mode. Nintendo promises two new varieties of Pikmin to discover (purple and white), as well as more than 60 creatures to interact with, including giant sluglike beasts and a burrowing crab monster. Other new features include randomized caves to explore, special "gas attacks" (enabled when Pikmin eat berries), and open-ended play that allows Olimar to explore the strange world he crash-landed on in the first game. There's even a sweet mystery to be had in the form of...but that would be telling. **LE**

GMA SAYS ➔ And to think how much time we wasted raising geraniums. Stupid geraniums!

➔ **HOW HOT...** 🔥 🔥 🔥 🔥



RELEASE | OCTOBER

WHIPLASH

□ SYSTEM: PS2, XBOX □ PUBLISHER: EIDOS □ DEVELOPER: CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

MORE FUR THAN A WOOKIEE PORNO

➔ Meet Sparx the weasel and Redmond the rabbit. Together, they're a couple of test-lab refugees with little in common except for the three feet of chain that shackles them together. *Whiplash* brings to life this pair's attempt to escape the evil clutches of the Genro Corporation. The player's main weapon? Having Sparx swing Redmond around in order to slap the suits upside the head. Personally, we like being able to turn the tables and test out new products—like the "Hair-Go" hair removal kit—on eggheads.

During their escape, the duo must cause as much wanton destruction as inhumanly possible by breaking lab equipment and cracking open cages. The action can be savored via the security cameras that line the office—there's nothing better than seeing newly liberated monkeys beating up on their former captors. Plenty of puzzles abound; one requires pushing Redmond into a dispenser that sets the poor widdle wabbit on fire. **LE**

GMA SAYS ➔ PETA's finally getting the game they deserve: *When Animals Strike Back*.

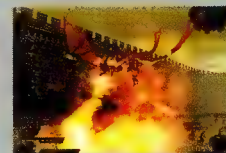
➔ **HOW HOT...** 🔥 🔥 🔥

DRAKENGARD

□ SYSTEM: PS2 □ PUBLISHER: SQUARE ENIX □ DEVELOPER: SQUARE ENIX

Square Enix's all-new action-adventure looks something like a hybrid of the *Panzer Dragon* and *Dynasty Warriors* series. So, no complaints there. Players can enjoy intense aerial combat astride a lavishly illustrated dragon, and brawling with the infantry below. Color us intrigued by the appetizing gameplay: RPG elements and an epic backstory should give this dragon teeth.

RELEASE | Q1 2004



➔ **HOW HOT...** 🔥 🔥 🔥

CONFORMITY IS SUCH AN UGLY WORD



NOT YOUR ORDINARY GAME

EVERQUEST ONLINE ADVENTURES PS2

Thousands of players. Hundreds of challenges. One game.

Build a mighty hero as you complete formidable quests, battle countless monsters and unite with players from around the globe to explore the mystical land of Norrath. Welcome to the world of EverQuest Online Adventures, a 3D massively multiplayer fantasy roleplaying game made exclusively for the PlayStation 2. Prepare to enter an enormous virtual environment—a seamless realm populated by sorcerers, elves, and creatures both friend and foe. But will you take shelter in parties or dare venture out by yourself?



You and five thousand of your best friends will explore a world inhabited by monsters that will chill your blood and weaken your heart. With hundreds of spells to discover and steel enough to arm a legion of men, EverQuest Online Adventures will turn even the most stalwart gamer into a quivering coward.

EverQuest Online Adventures is ready for you. But are you ready for it?



BREAK OUT OF



THE ORDINARY



BREAK OUT TRICKS

SOULCALIBUR® II PS2

A—Horizontal Slash K—Kick
B—Vertical Slash G—Guard
A dark arrow means to hold the direction until the move is complete.



This is a throw move that must be done while Ivy's weapon is in whip form.

To Change into Whip: ↓↙↘

Calamity Symphony: During Whip. ↘↗→↓↙↘ (A)+(K)

If this one is too complex, here's an easier move:

Spiral Punishment: ←(A)+(B)(B)

NEEDS

Spinning Demon Uppercut: →↓↘(K)(K)(K)(B)



MLB SLUGFEST 20-04 PS2



CHEAT CODES

2, 4, 2, GPCD, DOWN, 16" SOFTBALL
0, 0, 4, GPCD, RIGHT, WHIFFLE BAT
2, 0, 0, GPCD, RIGHT, BIG HEAD
0, 0, 4, GPCD, UP, LOG BAT
0, 0, 3, GPCD, UP, ICE BAT
2, 0, 0, 2, GPCD, UP, BLADE BAT
0, 0, 5, GPCD, UP, SPIKE BAT
0, 0, 1, GPCD, UP, BONE BAT
3, 3, 3, GPCD, UP, COLISEUM STADIUM

3, 2, 1, GPCD, UP, ROCKETPARK STADIUM
3, 3, 3, GPCD, DOWN, MONUMENT STADIUM
3, 2, 1, GPCD, DOWN, MIDWAY PARK STADIUM
2, 4, 2, GPCD, UP, RUBBER BALL
0, 0, 4, GPCD, LEFT, MACE BAT
2, 0, 0, GPCD, DOWN, TINY HEAD
3, 0, 0, GPCD, DOWN, MAX BATTING
0, 3, 0, GPCD, DOWN, MAX POWER
0, 0, 3, GPCD, DOWN, MAX SPEED

1, 1, 3, GPCD, DOWN, GLADIATOR TEAM
1, 1, 3, GPCD, DOWN, BOBBLE HEAD TEAM
1, 0, 2, GPCD, DOWN, DOLPHIN TEAM
1, 1, 2, GPCD, DOWN, SCORPION TEAM
1, 2, 2, GPCD, DOWN, SUBZERO TEAM
1, 3, 2, GPCD, DOWN, RODEO CLOWN
1, 0, 1, GPCD, DOWN, LITTLE LEAGUE
2, 1, 1, GPCD, DOWN, EVIL CLOWN TEAM
2, 3, 1, GPCD, DOWN, ALIEN TEAM

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DARE TO LOG ON TO BUTTERFINGER.COM

RELEASE | Q1 2004

NFS: UNDERGROUND

SYSTEM: GC, PS2, XBOX PUBLISHER: EA DEVELOPER: BLACK BOX

ROUND MIDNIGHT

➔ When a series achieves mass-market success and sustains that success over the course of a number of sequels, it's hardly a surprise when subsequent iterations are met with increasing apathy. What is surprising is when a solid but stagnant series is given not only a lifeline, but also a serious injection of balls late in its cycle. Such was the case when Electronic Arts put recently acquired developer Black Box on the *Need for Speed* series. Better known for its prowess with hockey games (*NHL 2K*, *NHL 20-02*), Black Box blew everyone away with its work on *Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2*, released last October.

Gorgeous to look at and even more fun to play, the blistering sense of speed and the intense police-pursuit action suddenly put the series,

literally, back on the map.

Now the Black Box team is back at it with *Need for Speed: Underground*, which, as these screenshots should tell you, looks even better than what came before it, with visuals on par—or possibly even better than—*Gran Turismo 4*'s. Borrowing a page from the *Midnight Club* book of after-hours street racing, each of the game's 20 cars is fully customizable down to the nitrous injection. And if street racing and drag racing aren't enough to pump you up, the four-player broadband online racing should be just the [speeding] ticket. **1C**

GMA SAYS → *Gran Turismo* what? *Racing Evolution* who? They may be great, but we're betting on *Underground* for our arcade bang for the buck.

➔ **HOW HOT...** 🔥 🔥 🔥 🔥



RELEASE | OCTOBER

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 2

SYSTEM: PC PUBLISHER: TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE DEVELOPER: ILLUSION SOFTWARES

SNEAK ATTACK

➔ This sequel to 1999's innovative but flawed tactical squad-shooter *Hidden & Dangerous* has been in the works for a long time. Once again putting you in the fatigues of covert WWII Special Forces squad commander, *Hidden & Dangerous 2* looks to correct some of its predecessor's mistakes and give gamers a unique and realistic action-shooter that will please the squad leader in all of us.

Hidden & Dangerous 2's enhanced real-time command system makes the sense of leading a small elite squad of commandos possible. Imagine you're playing as a member of a five-man British SAS squad and you must control and give tactical orders to all of your squadmates

while you keep an eye out on your own butt. *Hidden & Dangerous 2*'s intuitive control interface and improved A.I. should make this experience more enjoyable than it was the first time around.

The action, spread across 20 missions that have you visiting exotic locales such as Burma and North Africa, is fast but very realistic. Ballistics re-create their real-world behaviors, and bullets travel through only certain materials. Based on the LS3D game engine (used in *Mafia*), *Hidden & Dangerous* should look every bit as good as it plays. **1C**

GMA SAYS → It's been a long time coming, but it looks like it could finally be worth it.

➔ **HOW HOT...** 🔥 🔥 🔥



ADVENT RISING

SYSTEM: PC, XBOX PUBLISHER: MAJESCO DEVELOPER: GLYPHIX

A recently refocused Majesco is now working with design studio Glyphix to bring an interstellar epic from a screenplay by sci-fi heavyweight Orson Scott Card. Specifics are slim, but we're willing to bet that the game (concerning the mostly mythical human race and the Seekers, an alien race wishing to eradicate what's left of "em") will boast more brainpower than most "humans vs. the aliens" fare.

RELEASE | Q1 2004



➔ **HOW HOT...** 🔥 🔥 🔥

INCOMING GAMES

tony hawk's underground → rogue squadron iii: rebel strike

RELEASE | OCTOBER

TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND

□ SYSTEM GC, PS2, XBOX □ PUBLISHER ACTIVISION
□ DEVELOPER NEVERSOFT

THIS TIME, THE PRO IS YOU

➔ When skating legend Tony Hawk told us at E3 that his next game would focus on a story mode, we laughed. Ha, you know? We thought he was kidding. But it's true, and it could make the series interesting again.

You begin *Tony Hawk's Underground* (T.H.U.G., for short) as a no-name skater living in the burbs, and you hit the streets looking for people who—as in Grand Theft Auto—give you missions that'll earn you money and fame. Over time, you start competing with the pros in parks around the world and leave those mean Jersey streets that you called home.

What else is there? Well, besides objectives that will have you (gasp!) driving cars, you can get off your skateboard and climb up the side of a building to grind phone wires and connect more tricks. There's a more-robust Create-a-Skater mode, which you can use to map your picture over your skater's face.



(How? You e-mail Neversoft a shot, and the company sends a code so that you can download it. Pow.) Also, the Create-a-Park feature has been expanded and is joined by the new Create-a-Goal, Create-a-Trick, and Create-a-Board modes. And, as before, you can compete online, share your created parks, and download player-designed levels. Oh, but wait. Those online bits? They're for PS2 only. On Xbox Live? Feel free to start whining to Activision...now. ☹

GMA SAYS → This latest Tony has our interest, but so many similar games in the past keep us from getting too excited...

➔ HOW HOT...



RELEASE | FALL

ROGUE SQUADRON III: REBEL STRIKE

□ SYSTEM GC □ PUBLISHER LUCASARTS
□ DEVELOPER FACTOR 5

HIT ME VADER. ONE MORE TIME...

➔ How much fun can LucasArts squeeze out of old *Star Wars* movies? In the original *Rogue Squadron*, Factor 5 showed that it could invent cool new *Star Wars* adventures, and in the sequel, *Rogue Leader*, the developer proved it could do justice to the first trilogy's key x-wing, *Millennium Falcon*, and snowspeeder sequences. With *Rebel Strike*, the company hopes to re-create the trilogy's remaining best moments by using 3D models that put Kenner's old action-figures and toys to shame.

The focus of *Rebel Strike*'s single-player E3 demo was the frozen planet Hoth, a level that seamlessly mixed third-person running and vehicle scenes. By choosing to revisit a planet depicted adequately in earlier Nintendo *Star Wars* titles, Factor 5 showed how those games managed to miss memorable cinematic moments: *Strike* skips the Snowspeeder ride, starting you as Luke on foot, grappling up and lightsabering AT-ATs from below before humbling them with thermal detonators. You'll shoot and taunt across a battlefield dotted with snow stormtroopers, ending the level by jumping into an



X-wing to shoot down TIE fighters. Quality cinematics bridge the sequences.

Other levels will inspire nostalgia. Endor's lush jungles feature Imperial speeder-bike racing and AT-ST shootouts, and Luke teams up with Han and Chewie to rescue Princess Leia from the Death Star. Prefer something different? Play *Strike* another way by using second-stringer Wedge Antilles, whose new vehicle-based adventures coincide and contrast with Luke's better-known on-foot exploits.

The best new feature? A friend can join you. All of *Rogue Leader*'s levels are included with *Rebel Strike*, retrofitted with multiplayer functionality so that the Death Star can finally be attacked by human teams. Who would have ever guessed that the old could seem so new again? ☹

GMA SAYS → Lucas should have consulted Factor 5 before making the prequels—these guys really know how to make fans happy.

➔ HOW HOT...



THIS IS NOT A DRIVING GAME.



"...an immense landscape covering hundreds of miles of LA streets..."

—IGN.com

RELEASE | NOVEMBER

GO GO HYPER-GRIND

SYSTEM GC PUBLISHER ATLUS DEVELOPER POPONCHI

LET'S GRIND TOGETHER

➔ When the disturbed minds behind *Ren and Stimpy* join forces with a team of crazed Japanese game developers to create a cartoon skateboarding title, the end result is guaranteed to be several shades of odd and seriously screwed-up.

The game isn't due for months, but it's already exceeding its quota for insanity and sporting some pretty tight gameplay, all with a unique and painful twist. And crunch.

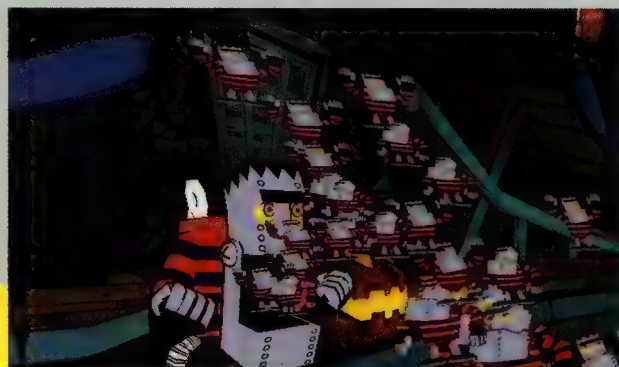
The Spumco-designed characters are a strange bunch: an androgynous child in a pink bunny-suit with murderously glowing red eyes, a mummy with pigtales, a corpulent pig in a tiny bikini, and the disturbing but aptly named "Johnson Brothers."

Despite their looks, they all control sharply and are capable of performing real-world skate tricks along with physics-defying fantasy moves.

What sets these guys apart from other sk8rs is that they'll bust out of a portable toilet covered in brown muck, set themselves on fire, then get decapitated by a nearby buzz saw before landing that perfect Kickflip McTwist. Energetic punk rock and stages as wacky as the contestants help facilitate this wanton self-mutilation, which—amazingly—does wonders for your score. ☞

GMA SAYS ➔ It looks technically solid and stylistically whack. But will gamers buy it?

➔ HOW HOT... 🔥🔥🔥



RELEASE | NOVEMBER

FINAL FANTASY: CRYSTAL CHRONICLES

SYSTEM GC PUBLISHER SQUARE ENIX DEVELOPER SQUARE ENIX

CLEARLY PROMISING

➔ Square burned a few bridges by ditching out on Nintendo during the '90s, so the house built by Moogles is prepared to kiss and make up. Be warned: *Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles* may have Square's crown jewel attached to its name, but bears little resemblance to the famed series.

An action RPG at its core, *Chronicles* takes concepts Nintendo has been pushing hard on GC users—multiplayer and connectivity—and makes them crucial elements. To avoid messy menus during battle, you use the GBA to control characters. You can access equipment menus via individual GBA screens, therefore allowing the action to occur uninterrupted.

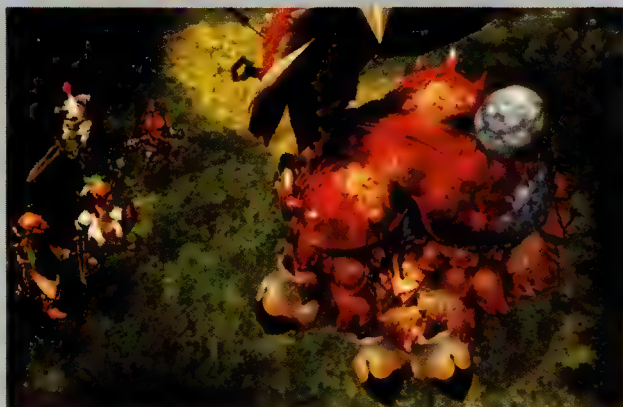
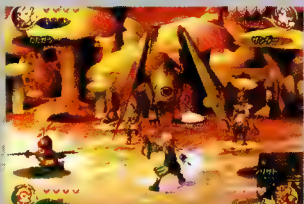
Don't own a GBA? You're in luck,

because GC controllers work—at least for the most part, anyway. During multiplayer, if you don't have a GBA, you lose the option to manage your equipment. New abilities are stocked away automatically.

So far, *Chronicles* seems to be headed in all the right directions—although, admittedly, it could prove a challenge just to pick up and play. We were at a loss at E3, unsure of how to take advantage of the GBA. We're looking forward to some serious test time with three friends, and a nice, comfy, couch. ☞

GMA SAYS ➔ Do we really need to have four GBAs on hand every time we feel like playing?

➔ HOW HOT... 🔥🔥🔥



FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR

SYSTEM XBOX PUBLISHER THQ DEVELOPER PANDEMIC

E3 attendees left the show raving about this game. Maybe it was the publicity stunt: Army Rangers repelling out of Blackhawk helicopters over the convention center. Or maybe it was the hyperrealistic modern Army combat portrayed in the game. Either way, we're looking forward to telling you more about THQ's joint venture with the U.S. Army next month, once we've gotten our butts in the line of fire.

RELEASE | Q1 2004



➔ HOW HOT... 🔥🔥🔥

INCOMING GAMES

mario kart double dash → lords of everquest

RELEASE | DECEMBER

MARIO KART DD

□ SYSTEM GC □ PUBLISHER NINTENDO
□ DEVELOPER NINTENDO

NINTENDO DOUBLES DOWN

➔ We've been waiting for way too long. Not to take anything away from *Mario Kart Super Circuit*, but firing off a desperation red shell and having it connect just before crossing the finish line is infinitely more satisfying on the big screen. Yes, a new console *Mario Kart* is a big deal, and so are the new changes we see in *Double Dash*.

The most obvious alteration to the *Mario Kart* formula is the addition of a co-driver perched in the rear of the character-specific karts (which also happen to be new). Each character can hold an item, and you can swap places at any time during the race. Speed and handling attributes are no longer linked to specific characters—they now depend on which kart you choose (yep, also new). To accommodate the new camaraderie, the driver roster has been doubled from the traditional 8 characters to a more robust 16, including some unexpected surprises (Birdo?) and the return of some old favorites (Koopa Troopa!).

Other significant changes include the absence of the red and green triple shell shields, the inability to drag banana peels or shells behind you as a



blocking move, and the loss of your items when you get clocked by a competitor. How well do these changes work? While we could warm to the idea of devising new strategies because of a reduced defense, getting knocked out of contention and not being able to retaliate right away is just damn irritating. Perhaps the change we're most excited about, however, is the not-quite-online-but-thanks-anyway addition of LAN support for up to eight players. We imagine the trouble of assembling two of everything (GameCubes, games, televisions, broadband adapters) will be well worth it. **IC**

GMA SAYS → To be honest, we'd probably fork over \$50 for a flaming bag of dog poo as long as it had *Mario Kart* written on it.

➔ HOW HOT...



RELEASE | WINTER

LORDS OF EVERQUEST

□ SYSTEM PC □ PUBLISHER SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT
□ DEVELOPER RAPID EYE ENTERTAINMENT

WARQUEST? EVERCRAFT?

➔ Not to be outdone by Blizzard—which is taking a wildly popular real-time strategy game and translating it into a massively multiplayer online role-playing game—Sony Online Entertainment is taking a wildly successful MMORPG and translating it into an RTS. *Lords of EverQuest* is a fast-paced clickfest like *WarCraft III*, but it's set in the popular online world and utilizes the characters of *EverQuest*.

But *Lords of EverQuest* is hardly *WarCraft III* in *EverQuest*'s clothing. For one, the gameplay is much more action-packed and battle-centric. You won't waste as much time harvesting resources, since there's only one in the game: platinum. You will spend a lot of time paying close attention to your units, which will level up and acquire spells and skills as if they were in an RPG.

The units in *Lords of EverQuest* are pure *EQ*, and should drive fans of that game mad with geeky pleasure. In addition to the Lord units, which



represent various races from *Iksar* to Goblins to Ogres, there are individual units like the huge and imposing Hammerskull Grunt, the nasty *Iksar* Defilers, and the cute Goblin Blitzers. OK, maybe they're not exactly cute, but they're attached to a balloon and balloons are inherently cute.

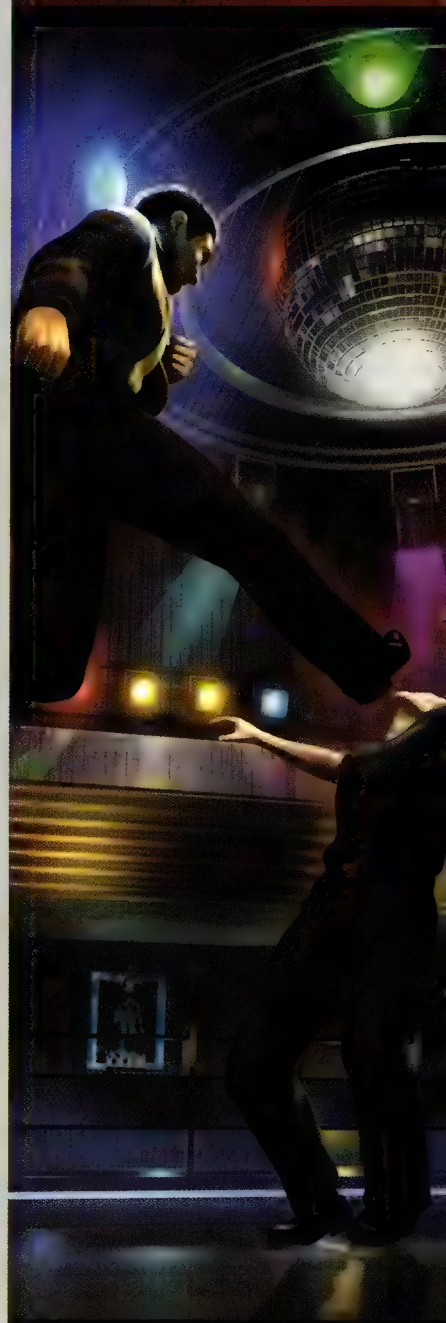
Lords of EverQuest is definitely not an MMORPG. There's no monthly fee to play online, although online play will be a crucial mode, just as it is for Blizzard's real-time strategy games. Up to 12 players will be supported on a map—and that's a lot of bang for your online-gaming nonbuck. **IC**

GMA SAYS → Just what we need: more fun RTS games and more *EverQuest*. No, really, it is just what we need.

➔ HOW HOT...



THIS IS NOT A FIGHTING GAME.



"The fighting in *True Crime* looks just as good, if not better, than many of the fighting games out there."

—Electronic Gaming Monthly, Jan. 2003



RELEASE | WINTER

FABLE

SYSTEM: XBOX PUBLISHER: MICROSOFT DEVELOPER: BIG BLUE BOX STUDIOS

GREATEST RPG EVER? YOU DECIDE.

➔ "This is the story of a hero," reads the opening text to the much hyped and seldom-seen Xbox RPG *Fable*. In fact, it's the story of the greatest hero ever: you.

The first playable version of *Fable*, shown at E3, offers players an all-too-brief peek at a game that seems to be as deep as it is wide. There are huge rock trolls unfolding from stone outcroppings. There are werewolf-like creatures called Balverines. There's a hero's guild from which you choose quests, and a bragging platform where you gain additional fame by opting to take on missions under specific conditions.

Fable lets you mold the main character in ways both subtle and sublime. Make him use his sword a

lot, and he'll grow into a brutish figure with tufts of hair in places no human should have hair. If he employs magic, his body will become covered in arcane tattoos and trailed by blue-gray energy effects. Emphasize stealth, and he'll develop a thinner, more toned physique.

Epic in scope, *Fable* spans the length of the hero's life, during which time his actions will determine how he's treated by others. His appearance will also change to fit his personality, and the game's developers are quick to note that truly bad guys are rotten enough to attract flies. ☹

GMA SAYS → We're afraid to play this game. Our hero might be a fat, balding pie eater whose only skill is shuffling for nickels.

➔ HOW HOT... 🔥🔥🔥🔥

FULL THROTTLE 2

SYSTEM: PC, PS2, XBOX PUBLISHER: LUCASARTS DEVELOPER: LUCASARTS

ON THE ROAD AGAIN (WITH BEN)...

➔ The highway to heck leads straight to PS2, PC, and Xbox as Ben the biker, star of the goofy-cool PC hit (and full-time cult classic) *Full Throttle*, returns for an all-new ass-kicking 3D third-person adventure. *Full Throttle: Hell on Wheels* brings Ben to sleepy backwater burb El Nada (in Spanish: The Nothing!) and into a future where there are no laws.

As it turns out, El Nada is being torn up, and Ben and his gang, the Polecats, are out to find the culprit. Eventually, this brings them into conflict with the Hound Dogs—a rival biker clan inspired by the King himself—and, eventually, the evil mastermind behind the whole plot. Along the way, Ben meets up with some characters from the first

game, including his mentor Father Torque and heiress Maureen Corley.

LucasArts promises more than 35 levels; 20 environments; and a host of gangs, each with its own theme, cool hideout, and motorcycle style. Real-time brawls can be fought hand-to-hand or with all sorts of cool weaponry, such as crowbars, guitars, and pool cues. Ben will be able to pilot his trademark hog as well as other motorcycles—and even a blimp. More importantly, *Hell on Wheels* promises to wield the same brand of wacky humor as the first game, which is good news for every human being alive. ☹

GMA SAYS → This one may not bear Tim Schafer's madcap creativity (he's a genius, took 'im up), but we expect a smooth ride nonetheless...

➔ HOW HOT... 🔥🔥🔥



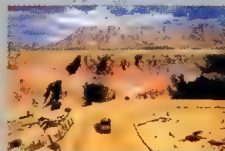
➔ HOW HOT... 🔥🔥🔥🔥

GRAN TURISMO 4

SYSTEM: PS2 PUBLISHER: SCEA DEVELOPER: POLYPHONY STUDIOS

Judging from *GT4*'s impressive E3 showing, "Bigger. Better. More." describes every aspect—from the graphics to the garage—of Kazunori Yamauchi's latest fetishistic homage to burning rubber. The genre-beating Rally mode has been considerably punched up and benefits from a gloriously realistic Grand Canyon backdrop. Expect more specifics soon, but for now, know that *GT4* ships early next year.

RELEASE | Q1 2004



RELEASE | Q1 2004

RESIDENT EVIL: OUTBREAK

□ SYSTEM PS2 □ PUBLISHER CAPCOM
□ DEVELOPER CAPCOM

NO LONGER ALONE IN THE DARK

➔ Capcom may have dropped this game's old title, *Resident Evil: Online*, but don't worry—you'll still be able to jump on the Net with up to three friends to solve puzzles and blast zombies. So why the name change? Two reasons: One, it's no longer online-only. You can play *Outbreak* all by yourself; it's still the same basic game offline, just with the computer controlling your three teammates. Second, the game's plot focuses on the Raccoon City outbreak (as seen in *RE2* and *RE3*) of the T-virus, a zombifying disease so nasty and contagious, it makes SARS look like chicken pox.

Raccoon City veterans will not be surprised to see that controls and combat stick fairly close to established *Resident Evil* series standards. So what else is new besides the online mode and entirely 3D graphics? Teamwork. If your crew is going to get through the zombie parade and make it out of town alive, you're going to have to work together. Different



players' skills (say, lock picking) and characteristics (maybe someone can fit through a vent others can't) can be used to unlock doors, help each other climb up to safety, and keep enemies at bay. Additionally, everyone can see what items everyone else is carrying, making sharing ammo or passing the precious green herb quick and easy. Too bad you can't talk or type to each other; you communicate solely through a Talk button, where the game uses context to decide what your character will say (i.e., "I declare, could one of you please assist me?" as a zombie bites open your neck.)

GMR SAYS → "Oh, ZombieKILLAH_742, I never meant to doubt your skills. You truly are the master of unlocking!"

→ HOW HOT...



RELEASE | Q1 2004

THIEF III

□ SYSTEM PC, XBOX □ PUBLISHER EIDOS
□ DEVELOPER ION STORM INTERACTIVE

RHYMIN' AND STEALIN' MINUS THE RHYMES

➔ Not every first-person shooter need be a bloody mess. Ask anyone who's enjoyed the *Thief* series, where your M.O. is to break in, grab loot, and get out with as little killing as possible. Despite critical acclaim, we haven't heard from this sneaky S.O.B. for a while—until now.

After seeing a preview build of *Thief III*, we can tell that this installment is going to snatch up a whole lot of your free time. Why? Because by utilizing some new technology, the game looks a whole lot better and the enemies are a whole lot smarter.

As Garrett, rogue for hire, you sneak into a series of surprisingly sharp situations. Obviously, the PC version looks better than the Xbox game, but working on both versions with shared code has ensured one thing for the developers: simplicity.

Garret isn't a one-man army, so players will need their wits about them. Sure, you can blackjack a guard over the head, but you have to make damn sure he's out cold and out of sight. If other guards see him or notice their partner is missing, they'll



raise the alarm. And yes, the goons are a whole lot smarter. Case in point: We doused a torch, intending to sneak surreptitiously by in the shadows; however, we waited too long, and a disgruntled guard muttered and came over to relight the torch.

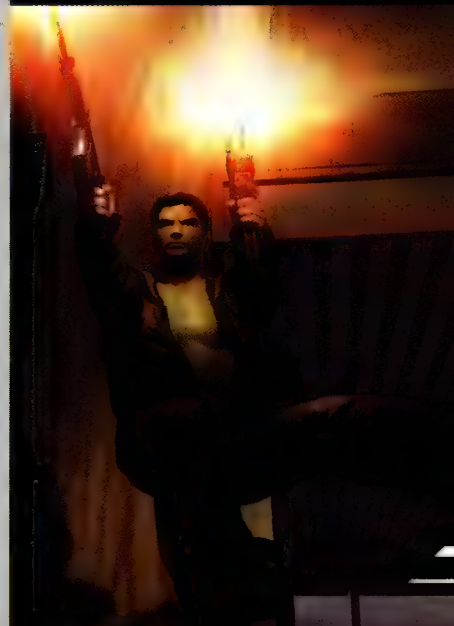
Since the whole point is to avoid detection, it looks as though there will be only one onscreen meter—a gem that displays Garrett's visibility. You can hide in the dynamically rendered shadows or manipulate items in the environment, such as chairs, to create shadows. Most importantly, don't get caught—folks 'round here don't take kindly to thieves.

GMR SAYS → Don't get any bright ideas—dipping behind the store counter for a free copy will earn you a medieval beatdown

→ HOW HOT...



THIS IS NOT A SHOOTING GAME.



THIS IS

TRUE CRIME™

STREETS OF LA™

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—PSM



PlayStation.2



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A full-page background image of a Ninja Gaiden character, likely Ryu Hayabusa, in a dynamic, action-oriented pose. He is wearing his signature black and white ninja attire, including a headband and arm warmers. He is holding a sword, and the scene is lit with dramatic, warm lighting, possibly from a fire or explosion in the background.

HANDS-ON

ZIP TO THE QUICK
ninja gaiden

XB

TECMO'S GAIDEN LIGHT

GMA GETS TOUCHY-FEELY WITH TEAM NINJA'S ENFORCER. NINJA GAIDEN—ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING, BEAUTIFUL GAMES YOU WILL PLAY THIS YEAR. READ ON



➔ The travels of Ryu Hayabusa are well documented. Having first appeared in arcades and on the Nintendo Entertainment System back in 1988, Tecmo's proud ninja has jumped and slashed his way from console to console, until settling down and gaining tenure in Tecmo's *Dead or Alive* series of fighting games. And now that they've had the elusive Hayabusa in their employ for some time, the ironically named Team Ninja (it's not responsible for any past *Ninja Gaiden*s) is preparing to unleash action overload on Xbox owners everywhere. *Ninja Gaiden* is—in no uncertain terms—back.

For the past year or so, we've all seen the same few screens circulating about, thinking quietly to ourselves, "Nice screens, but no way does the game look that good in action." It's a valid theory, considering how buff the characters looked, how manicured the backgrounds and superfluous details were, and how gorgeous the lighting effects seemed. Well, *GMR* is here to put those theories to rest. We've seen the game in action, up close and personal. We've put Hayabusa to the test and slashed, bludgeoned, and shot his enemies to bloody bits. We've run along walls, scaled the highest heights, and swung from extended tree limbs. We can say with complete confidence that *Ninja Gaiden* is for real. Believe it.

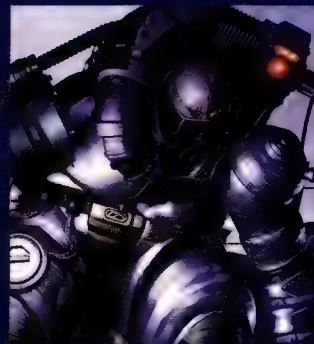
The series, up until now, hadn't existed outside the hardcore, niche-y microcosm of late '80s/early '90s gaming. *Ninja Gaiden* currently faces the task of staring down an audience that now numbers in the

tens of millions. We asked Team Ninja leader Tomonobu Itagaki if the game would be geared for the hardcore market, or if it would be watered down for the average consumer. "*Ninja Gaiden* for Xbox will have a higher difficulty level than what most people are probably used to from recent action games," he explains. "However, this will not be an unreasonable or frustrating amount of difficulty; it will be very fair. Gamers might find it difficult at first, but as they play, they will become surprised at their increasing ability to play well."

Set approximately two years before the events of the first *Dead or Alive* tournament, *Ninja Gaiden* clearly seeks to establish a continuity with Team Ninja's other projects. But what, if anything, does this game have in common with previous episodes? Itagaki clarifies this by saying, "The *Ninja Gaiden* trilogy on NES [*Ninja Gaiden* 1, 2, and 3] told a complete story. Therefore, we have absolutely no intention of trying to add something onto that story to make a fourth installment. Since "gaiden" means "another story, a side story" in Japanese, we'd like longtime *Ninja Gaiden* fans to think of this new Xbox game as another "side story."

The game opens with a cinema involving a female member of the Hayabusa clan as she struggles to protect their ancestral shrine. This is the tragedy that sets up the events to follow, hurling Ryu into battle against his clan's enemies.

Chief among his foes is a cybernetic warrior named Dynamo, who is the commander of the Vigor Empire Mechanized Special Attack Team ➔



← Meet Dynamo. As the commander of the [take a deep breath] Vigor Empire Mechanized Special Attack Team, it's his job to make ninja burgers out of Ryu Hayabusa's hide. Ryu's adventures take him through a military base in the early part of the game, and from there, into the sewer levels seen in these screenshots. Where Hayabusa goes from there, only Team Ninja knows.



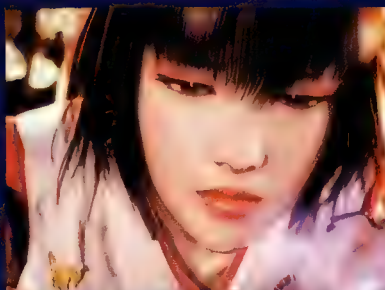
OH, RACHEL! NO BLONDE JOKES. OK?

➔ Behind every successful Super Ninja is a hot blonde dominatrix, or at least that's what they told us in college. Appearing at regular intervals during Ryu's adventure is *Ninja Gaiden*'s mysterious heroine, who goes by the name of Rachel. Her outfit can be loosely described as something along the lines of a leather handkerchief, but hey, we're OK with that.

"Is her outfit really that provocative?" asks Itagaki, as he summons his considerable powers of understatement. "Yes," we said, asking if she'd be playable in the game. "We're not really that interested in making the supporting characters playable," he says. "We are simply focusing on making the movements and actions of our "Super Ninja" Ryu Hayabusa the coolest on the planet."



WE DON'T BELIEVE THERE ARE ANY GAMES
RIGHT NOW THAT CAN COMPETE WITH NINJA
GAIDEN. OUR ONLY OPPONENTS ARE
OURSELVES, AND THE PASSAGE OF TIME.



➔ (MSAT). According to Itagaki, "he will prove to be a very powerful opponent for Hayabusa." Of course, before Ryu gets any quality time with Dynamo, he'll have to make his way past the hordes of hulking monsters (and magical demons) he faces along the way. Fortunately, being a ninja has its benefits. Loaded to the gills with an arsenal that would make Norman Schwarzkopf blush, Ryu has at his disposal the standard-issue ninja katana and multiple types of shurikens. Besides the normal throwing stars, Ryu has exploding shurikens and—in a move designed to excite old-school *Ninja Gaiden* fans—Fu-Ma shurikens (the classic

oversized boomerang-style shurikens from previous games). On special occasions (meaning, when he's surrounded by enemies), Ryu can unleash his ninjutsu move, which incinerates everything nearby.

He'll find other weapons during his travels, like nunchaku and bows and arrows. Whacking enemies around with nunchakus is particularly satisfying, but when certain enemies are out of reach, Ryu's quiver full of fire arrows (among others) quickly takes care of business. Interestingly, when you use the bow, perspective switches from the usual third-person setting to a first-person view

that is both seamless and functional.

This brings up camera issues. After all, it was the camera that derailed other recent ninja efforts like Sega's *Shinobi*, but *Gaiden*'s works great. "Most full-3D action games have been ruined because of bad camera issues," Itagaki says. "Our camera has cleared all of the past hurdles with ease. With this exceptional camera engine and the motion engine borrowed from the *DOA* series supporting him, Hayabusa is able to move and act with a speediness and smoothness that is unprecedented in action gaming." While the camera is certainly adept at keeping the speedy action in view, should the

gamer desire a manual override, centering the camera behind Hayabusa is as simple as pressing a button.

Thankfully, the action gels beautifully in actual practice. Whether you're running along the wall (or backflipping between two pillars) to access hard-to-reach areas, cutting a giant dinosaur-skeleton boss down to size, or kicking a helicopter out of the sky, everything feels just right. It feels so right, in fact, that we can hardly wait to play the finished game, currently due out this November.

In time for the holidays, and in grand Team Ninja tradition, *Ninja Gaiden* will have lots of unlockable secrets to find.



→ The action in *Ninja Gaiden* never lets up. Monsters of all shapes and sizes assault Ryu Hayabusa from every angle, all the time. Fortunately, his arsenal of lethal weapons is always within reach. Whether you're making a pincushion out of your prey with your fire arrows (above), lopping their heads off with your katana (below), or breaking their skulls into little pieces with your sturdy nunchaku (right), you'll never lack for deadly options.



"Extra costumes from *DOA*?" we asked. "Actually, I'm looking more toward the early NES *Ninja Gaiden* series rather than *DOA*," Itagaki confessed. "I would like to add a lot of features to the game as homage to the earlier series. That's why I'm going back and playing the old NES games right now."

Interestingly, Itagaki has already envisioned a sequel. Would this weave the timeline into the events of the *DOA* series? "We have already conceptualized an action-game sequel. However, the main character has not yet been decided on. Of course, normally you would expect Ryu Hayabusa to be it, but who knows

what will happen a year from now?"

Who knows indeed? Taking the series that once shared the ninja limelight with *Shinobi* and *Strider* and leaving them in the dust is no easy task, but it seems as if that's exactly what Team Ninja has done. The controls are streamlined and responsive, the combat is exhilarating, and the graphics and sound put nearly every other console game to shame. But we think Team Ninja's boss says it best when he tells us, "What we have achieved in *Ninja Gaiden*, what we can say with pride to the world is that we have created a true 3D action game." 14

HEY, DON'T I KNOW YOU? DOA'S PURPLE PRINCESS SAYS "HAI!"

→ *Dead or Alive* fans will enjoy seeing their favorite purple-haired ninja, Ayane, make an appearance in *Ninja Gaiden*. Itagaki-san tells us, "Yes, Ayane is in *Ninja Gaiden*. The story takes place before the events of the first *Dead or Alive* tournament—two years before. Ayane at that time is 14 years old, which should cause problems with the ESRB [laughs]. But since she's, at that time, not quite a ninja master yet, she serves as a messenger for Hayabusa. Actually, she's a messenger to Hayabusa. She is



part of the Mugen Tenshi Ryu society, and serving them, serves as a messenger to Hayabusa for what is to come."



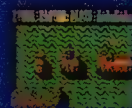
NINJA GAIDEN THROUGH THE YEARS

NINJA GAIDEN [NES]



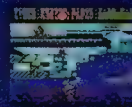
Though it was preceded by an arcade game bearing the same name and virtually no other resemblance, the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) version is considered the original. Introducing Ryu Hayabusa and his brand of ninja justice, *Ninja Gaiden*'s punishingly hard six acts were also tied together by a strong story—previously unseen in an action game.

NINJA GAIDEN II: THE DARK SWORD OF CHAOS [NES]



Wait a year, bump up the graphics, tack on an impressive subtitle, and you have the formula for the perfect sequel. Unfortunately, something suffered, and the relentless difficulty of the original...er, relented, making the game more palatable for newcomers but leaving vets cold. "Can't please everyone all of the time" is what mama used to say. Still, a great follow-up.

NINJA GAIDEN III: THE ANCIENT SHIP OF DOOM [NES]



Where the sequel gently tweaked the original's elements, part three turns them all up to 11. Vertically scrolling stages were the main addition, but you can't ignore the superpretty graphics or new power-ups. What you also can't ignore, sadly, is the ridiculous difficulty level. Harder than the original? You better believe it. All three games can be had in *Ninja Gaiden Trilogy* [SNES].

INTERNATIONAL KARATE

TECMO'S BEST-SELLING FIGHTING FRANCHISE, DEAD OR ALIVE, IS HEADING ONLINE. LOSER FOR A WORLDWIDE WHIPPIN'.



➔ Team Ninja's Tomonobu Itagaki—*Dead or Alive* series creator—casts a distinct shadow. He's rather tall for a Japanese man, he smokes what seems like five packs a day, and he likes his coffee black. He's so slim that if you met him, you'd probably want to offer him a sandwich. And you'll rarely see him without sunglasses on, even at night.

Nearly as famous as his games, though, is his mouth. Never one to give a dry interview, Itagaki has fired broadsides at unwitting targets, like the competition's fighting games (*Tekken*) and "underpowered" videogame hardware (PS2). By the same token, he shows no restraint discussing the merits of his favorite console (Xbox) and complimenting the development teams

he respects (Sega's AM2, among others). He is also more than happy to remind you that Team Ninja's games are the most beautiful in the world. The thing that separates Itagaki from most other loudmouths, though, are the games he has backing up his words.

Itagaki first made his stamp on gaming culture with the release of *Dead or Alive* in 1996. As the first company to license Sega's Model 2 arcade hardware, Tecmo stunned fighting game purists everywhere with its gorgeous, fast-moving fighter that combines the *Virtua Fighter*-style three-button control scheme with an innovative reversal system and the explosive Danger Zones. Of course, *DOA*'s roster of buoyant, buxom battling babes also helped the game stand out.

As the *DOA* series progressed through the years (appearing first in arcades, then on Sega Saturn, PlayStation 2, Dreamcast, and, finally, Xbox), the likes of Helena (*DOA2*), Hitomi (*DOA3*), and Lisa (*DOA4*) have joined the original cast of Kasumi, Ayane, Tina, and Lei-Fang (along with the men).

Having already brought *Dead or Alive: Xtreme Beach Volleyball* to Xbox owners earlier this year, Itagaki is bringing the rest of the *DOA* series to the system, courtesy of *Dead or Alive Online*. The two-disc title includes the original Sega Saturn *Dead or Alive* and a rebuilt-for-Xbox version of *Dead or Alive 2: Hardcore* (based on the Japanese PS2 version of the game, which features stages not found in the U.S. release). Most ➔



➔ The Sega Saturn version of *Dead or Alive* (above) makes its first U.S. appearance in *DOA Online*. Our hands-on playtime with the game revealed that it looks better and plays just as fast as the original, if not faster. Many *DOA* fans will finally be able to experience this version, considered superior to the PlayStation version.

LIMITED EDITIONS FOR EVERYONE!

➔ Hardcore *Dead or Alive* fans who have been with the series from the beginning probably imported the original Sega Saturn version released in October 1997. True completists paid extra for a limited-edition set that came with an art book and a special picture disc featuring

Kasumi in her birthday suit. The point to this happy tale: The disc containing the Saturn version of *Dead or Alive* (*DOA Online* is a two-disc set) will display this resurrected classic artwork (minus the Saturn logo), which was designed by Team Ninja's Tomonobu Itagaki. **TE**



→ important, it lets gamers reach out and slap the brains out of each other over Xbox Live—the first 3D brawler to do so.

While the Sega Saturn version of *DOA* is a straight port of the original game, there are some pleasant side effects from its move to the more powerful Xbox: The antialiasing has smoothed-out the textures, and the opening CG movie now runs at 30 frames per second, rather than Saturn's grainy 15fps video.

So why did Itagaki choose to port the Saturn version as opposed to the arcade version, you might ask? Itagaki feels the Saturn version offers the purest *DOA* experience, since it comes with the extra costumes that fans have come to expect.

"The Model 2 [arcade] version is incomplete in my eyes," he says. "This is mainly because of problems with the motion engine and motion design. The Sega Saturn version is the first time in my life in which I've been completely satisfied with the finished product. That's why I chose to include it in *DOA Online*."

Since the original Saturn version fit comfortably on a CD-ROM, we asked if Team Ninja would fill the DVD with extras. "Other than the network code necessary for Xbox Live compatibility, we're not planning on adding anything special to the *DOA1* disc," Itagaki says. "At least, that's what I'm feeling like right now."

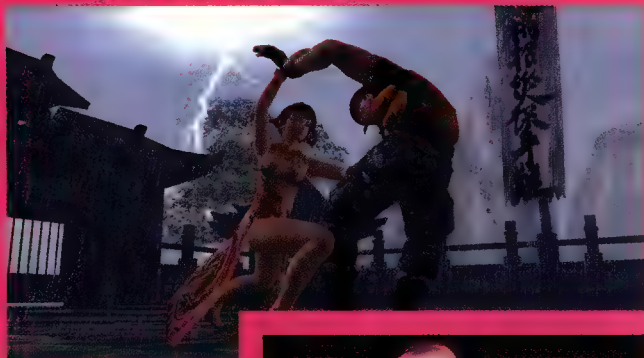
As for *DOA2: Hardcore*, this version is considerably different from the PS2 game. The speed, motion, and animation remain largely intact, but the graphics engine is superior to even *DOA3*'s. Using the new *DOAX* technology, *DOA2*'s characters will look as good as they did playing volleyball. Of course, this will also be the first time we see male characters like Bayman and Zack benefiting from this visual overhaul.

The now-famous multitiered backgrounds also get a significant visual boost. "For example," Itagaki says, "the original *DOA2* had a Kokua Japanese garden stage. In *DOA2 Online*, the stage is now a snowy stage. Lots of falling snow is building up, it's interactive, and there's a snowman in the garden. You can throw your enemy into the snowman and make him shatter, which makes *DOA2: Hardcore* harder hardcore." (laughs)

Since the jump between *DOA* and *DOA2* features many advancements, we asked Itagaki if he expects more people to play *DOA2*. "Yeah, I think so," he says. "But if you play *DOA1*, you'll discover that it's still really fun."

Fans interested in *DOA*'s backstory will be glad to know that the *DOA2: Hardcore* portion of *DOA Online* more deeply explores Kasumi and Ayane's relationship through new CG movies. "It's a story movie," Itagaki tells us. "When the *Dead or Alive* fans see it, they will understand the *DOA* world. Ayane hates Kasumi, but now they'll know why, and they'll understand the mystery behind Kasumi's past."

Of course, for fans interested only in the color of Kasumi's panties, Team Ninja intends to include a new batch of outfits not found in the original *DOA2: Hardcore*. "We plan to add more costumes than the original game had," Itagaki says. "Not as many as *DOAX*, but the player can get many new costumes through offline play and use them online. We're not exactly Banana Republic, but we try to give the fans what they want." With less than five months to go before *DOA Online*'s late October release date, fans will soon be able to decide for themselves if Team Ninja has accomplished just that. ☛



→ Ayane was formally introduced in the PlayStation version of *DOA*. Trivia fans might be interested to know that Raidou, *DOA*'s end boss, is Ayane's father. Kasumi kills him in the *DOA* tournament, which explains Ayane's series-long grudge.



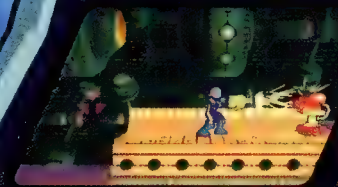
"WE'RE NOT EXACTLY BANANA REPUBLIC, BUT WE TRY TO GIVE THE FANS WHAT THEY WANT."



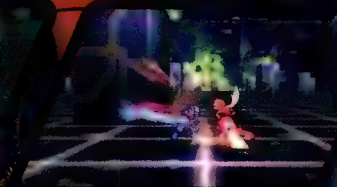
← "Dammmmmm!" you're saying as you check out the new *DOA2: Hardcore* screens. They sure look nice. "But what of *DOA3*?" you ask, wondering aloud when you'll be able to play as Christie and Brad Wong online. Sensing your alarm, Team Ninja's Tomonobu Itagaki elaborates: "I'm thinking of making *DOA3 Online* for Xbox. I think that *DOA3* is still a good game, and that many people want to play it online, but *DOA1* and 2 are first. *DOA3* already exists on Xbox, so my first job is to bring the original titles to Xbox fans. *DOA1* is a love-based game; we're doing this out of love for our fans. *DOA2* is a fighting-spirit-based game. We want to show our determination to drive the Xbox with our power."

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WE'VE PLAYED...
Far Cry

HANDS-ON!

OUT OF THE BLUE

GERMAN CODE SHOP CRYTEK IS LOOKING TO LEAVE IO IN THE SHADE WITH THE SUNDRENCHED ACTION GAME FAR CRY



➔ The sky is Soya blue, with luscious clouds. The sand beneath your feet is pure white, and the palm trees sway in the breeze. Seagulls cry overhead, and the sun bakes every surface to a gold. You're even wearing a hot summer shirt. Any minute now, you fully expect the buxom beauties of *DOA: Extreme Beach Volleyball* to come speeding into a view. But even their beer-commercial island paradise can't compare to this. The last time you wandered into a world as beautifully realized, there were no people, and you were forced to turn the hands of clocks, twiddle knobs, read star charts, and talk to "holograms" that popped up out of books and were clearly the game's programmers dressed up in bathrobes wearing crap beards. But the world of *Far Cry* is no *Myst*. It's real-time, for a start, and if it weren't for the heavily armed goons, the gunboat, the barrels of high explosives, and the dastardly kidnapping plot, you might just be tempted to suck back, crack a beer, and take a little R&R.

→ And that's sort of the idea, according to the game's producer, Chris Natsuumi.

"We said anything you can do on a tropical island vacation, you should be able to do in our game, in addition to playing a first-person shooter," he claims. "So the first thing you want is to walk around the beautiful beaches, swim in the beautiful ocean, and walk around in the beautiful jungles. It gives you a real immersive feel of being on this tropical island vacation."

Crytek decided from the very beginning that it didn't want to produce another game with "you know, a dark creepy spaceship or some sort of evil satanic environment" because, as Natsuumi takes great pains to insist, the company would be "nailed to the wall for being a clone." Originality is at the top of the list of priorities (the original game, which featured aliens, was nixed for that very reason). The result should be a title that owes more to the likes of *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*, with its lush, wide tropical surroundings, than the foreboding interiors of either *Half-Life* or *Unreal*.

The graphics are certainly striking, and in many ways, *Far Cry* is—at this relatively early stage—a triumph of style over substance. But then again, so is *DOOM 3*, which, by the way, uses almost identical graphics technology (see Polybump sidebar). But *id*'s game, despite being eagerly anticipated, is very definitely in the creepy spaceship category (in fact, it virtually invented it). *Far Cry* is the anti-*DOOM*—its protagonists are sun-drenched, its environments, for the most part, brightly lit, and its levels open to almost infinite exploration.

The first level begins with a wake-up call as our hero, Jack loops, so much for originality!), must fight his way out of the wreck of a rusting aircraft carrier—picking up weapons on the way—and then make his way to the top of a hill, where a generator awaits explosives. But how he gets there is, for the most part, entirely open to interpretation.

HANDS-ON: SAFETY OFF

You could play this level several times before you get the message: Wading in with all guns blazing gets you dead. Quick. Gradually, you learn to sneak up on your opponents—bald mercenaries reminiscent of the guys Chuck Norris kicks in the face between the rather more strenuous bouts of "acting"—and shoot them in the head. Play it still further and you learn to crouch behind the nearest

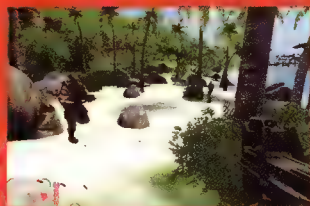
rock/tree/fern/sand dune, and use your cool binoculars to identify the leader (clue: he has hair and he sports a red insignia on his shoulder) and take him down first, throwing his rent-a-goons into disarray. You do this because the last two times you attacked them, they outflanked you, and one of them even sniped you in the head.

This relatively human response is the result of unscripted A.I. Standard A.I. in games like, for example, *Medal of Honor* or *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*, places the enemies in the same location each time you play. The game always knows what direction you'll be coming from, which makes scripting the enemy response a relatively simple task. But not the case with *Far Cry*. The first level alone allows you to swim across the bay, avoiding two encounters with enemy mercenaries (you miss out on all their weapons, but you don't get shot, either). You can also attack from any angle.

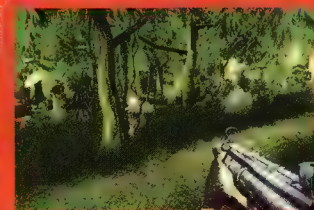
"We had to put aside all of our thoughts of scripting," says Natsuumi, "and put aside all of our thoughts about 'when the player does X, the A.I. does Y.' Instead, we know when the player is attacking, when the player makes a noise, when he's in the line of sight. In order to do that, we had to make the enemies actually listen, with a radius and a sensitivity, and look, and really scan the surroundings in real-time. If you walk behind a tree, they can't see you—they're sensing just like any real creature would. If you make a noise, your noise has a sound radius, and if the A.I. is within that radius, then they hear you."

This opens up a whole world of stealth tactics, as well as replay value. Hiding pays off, as does creeping about in the undergrowth, and the game features a handy radar that registers enemy locations and their level of alertness. Shades of *Metal Gear*, for sure.

At this stage, there's still work to do before *Far Cry* is ready for prime time. The enemy A.I. is convincing, but in its unfinished state, it becomes a bit predictable as you deconstruct the flanking tactics that adversaries adopt when they're in groups. Because of this, the first level, though open enough, points to predictable enemy patterns, which encourages the same approach to every encounter. Of course, with more than six months of development time left, there are plenty of late nights and weekends for Natsuumi and his team to fine-tune the A.I. and tighten the levels before they, well, pack up and head for that paradise island. If they get it right, *Far Cry* could well debut in the premier league of its genre. ■

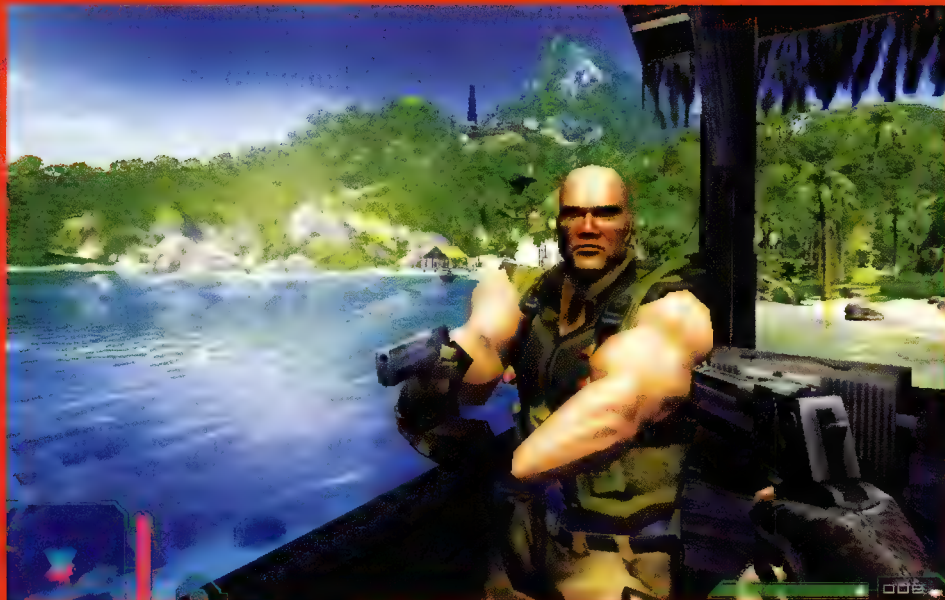


→ The environments are just about the most realistic and beautiful we've ever seen. Only Valve's *Half-Life 2* looks as good.

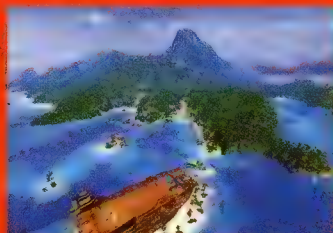


WE'VE PLAYED.

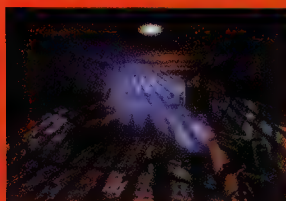
HANDS-ON!



→ The jungle (above) provides great cover and looks so real, you'll be stopping to examine the flora and fauna. Just make sure you don't get your head blown off while checking out the birds of paradise.



→ In addition to swimming (right), Crytek promises boats and hanggliding as you make your way through the vast and open levels. The interiors (below) feature much less prominently in the game than FPS fans may be used to, but are stuffed with cool effects.



ARGHH! THE TECHNOLOGY BIT! POLYBUMP, ANYONE?

→ Crytek's CryEngine is responsible for the hyperreal graphics (only Xboxes and PCs with GeForce 3-level cards minimum need apply). The engine uses a proprietary technology called Polybump to create objects and character models that look as if they have many more polygons than they do. GMR is of the mind-set that graphics engines are about as exciting as they sound, but *Far Cry's* technology is interesting because it represents, along with *Halo 2* and *Doom 3*, the next big thing. Crytek begins with a high-polygon model of a character (in the region of 250,000 polys) and then shines lights on it, which creates a light map that covers the model. They then take that map and use it to coat a model of the same character, but with just 1,500 polygons. 3D worlds are no longer about lots of polygons; they're about light. If you can use light to create detail, then you don't need to create hugely processor-expensive models with tens of thousands of polygons.

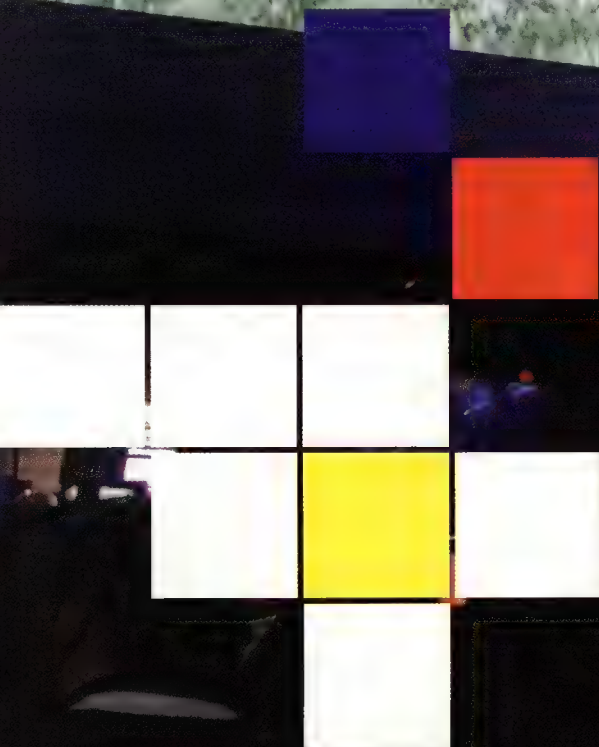


→ These images, taken from the supercomputers at Crytek's top-secret underground nuclear-proof bunkers (OK, taken from a PC in the cubicle next to the coffee machine) show the original high-polygon models of faces and objects (left of each image) and their low-polygon but 'Polybumped' cousins (on the right). Yes, we know, it's thrilling.

SHOWTIME & 3

GMA BREAKS DOWN THE 2003

ELECTRONIC





ENTERTAINMENT EXPO



Another E3 has come and gone, and so too has the usual annual crop of big announcements, no-shows, and pleasant surprises.

Industry frontrunner Sony had a strong—if not stellar—stable of games, with **MGS3: Snake Eater**, a 3D **Castlevania**, and a fourth **Gran Turismo** snaring the lion's share of attention. PC gamers, still reeling from the recent announcement of Valve's sequel **Half-Life 2**, were treated to a thoroughly incredible demo, leaving many to declare the stunning sequel the game of the show. Microsoft continued to trumpet the virtues of Xbox Live, as well as new features such as the Xbox Sports Network, a music mixing application, and a new pricing structure. Predictably, the eagerly awaited **Halo 2** continues to be one of Xbox's few shining stars. And Nintendo, recent victim of much speculation and maligning, made a strong case for its longevity by flaunting a solid, comprehensive array of titles and console connectivity. Its GBA faces competition (if not quite a challenge) from a slew of new handhelds, including the **TapWave**, Nokia's **N-Gage**, and Sony's **PSP**, the announcement of which left many an E3 attendee slackjawed with surprise.... I→



GAMERS MAY SOON BE SOURED TO WATERED-DOWN SEQUELS, "ME-TOOS," AND LACKLUSTER LICENSED GAMES

➔ For the gamer, of course, E3 '03 was as exciting as ever: According to pre-event press releases, more than 1,350 PC- and videogame-related products were displayed by over 400 exhibitors. Gamers will soon have plenty of choices to look forward to: 83 percent of the products shown will be on shelves by Christmas.

Autophiles can take a test drive with **GT 4**, **Project Gotham 2**, and **Need For Speed: Underground**, while action fans should get their fix with **Spider-Man 2**, **SOCOM 2**, and two new **Metal Gear Solid** games. The ever-popular FPS genre includes **Halo 2**, **Half-Life 2**, **DOOM III**, and new entries in EA's **Medal of Honor** series. RPG devotees can reasonably expect greatness from Square-Enix's latest **Final Fantasy**s. Similarly, sports gamers can look forward to a strong showing from EA's '04 lineup, not to mention

➔ Ahhh, Mega Man. Sights like this typically greet the weary E3 traveler outside each publisher's booth. A virtual guided tour of the gaming history, characters like Mario, Crash Bandicoot, Lara Croft, Solid Snake, the *Resident Evil* zombie gang, and even the Hulk graced booths for all to see.



SSX3 and **Tony Hawk's Underground**. Are we noticing a pattern?

Sequels aside, there were plenty of original titles to balance out this year's enumerated lineup. Novel titles such as **B.C.**, **Full Spectrum Warrior**, **Dororo**, **Boktai**, and **killswitch** all garnered plenty of admiration, while Ubi Soft's all-new **Prince of Persia** and **BG&E** cemented that company's return to action-game excellence.

For the uninitiated, E3 can be a bit like the circus. There are performers, there are shills, there are clowns, and there are animals of all sorts. And it's all topped off with a generous dose of distracting (and occasionally titillating) T&A. There are, of course, videogames, too, although show-

➔ So, what's going on with all these sequels? A clue can be found in this year's E3 slogan: "Where business gets fun." As the current crop of consoles reaches maturity, greater consumer awareness and familiarity ensures solid sales in an increasingly competitive (cannibalistic, even) market. Hence, more sequels and games tethered to stifling licenses. A degree of fiscal security is ensured, but gamers are as fickle and tightfisted a group as any. And with most games priced from \$29.99 to \$49.99 each, even casual gamers may soon be soured to watered-down sequels, "me-toos," and lackluster licensed properties. Let's hope they protest with their checkbooks.



CONSOLE CONFLICT

DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE! GMR RANKS THE BIG THREE AT E3



FIRST PLACE: PlayStation 2

You can call us biased, but with 20 million-plus installed units worldwide (you'd have to call the world biased, too), PS2 draws the most high-profile software. With such hard-hitting AAA titles as *MGS3*, *Final Fantasy X-2*, *Gran Turismo 4*, *Onimusha 3*, and *Castlevania* in the PS2 lineup, it's hard to argue. Sony's black box has the best and broadest selection of games, and that's what really counts, isn't it?



SECOND PLACE: GameCube

Besides *F-Zero*, *Pikmin 2*, *1080° Avalanche*, and *Mario Kart*, the first-party games were lacking: *Kirby's Air Ride*, *Star Fox*, and *Zelda: Four Swords* failed to win our hearts the way *Super Smash Bros. Melee* and *Metroid Prime* once did. *Metal Gear Solid: TTS*, Capcom's gorgeous *Viewtiful Joe*, *Resident Evil 4*, and *Killer 7* certainly helped. The focus on GBA-GameCube connectivity didn't win too many new fans.



THIRD PLACE: Xbox

Even an extended trailer for *Halo 2* couldn't disguise the fact that Microsoft's first-party software is uninspired. Case in point: *Voodoo Vince*. Without Nintendo's guiding hand, Rare's *Grabbed by the Ghoulies*, *Conker: Live and Uncut*, and the action-RPG *Kameo* made us roll our eyes so far back into our heads, it hurt. If not for *Ninja Gaiden*, the *DOOM III* trailer, and *K.O.T.O.R.*, we'd be reaching for the Prozac.

KNOWLEDGE
NINTENDO

← Nintendo's new lineup of made-for-connectivity games (*Zelda: Four Swords*, *Zelda: Tetra's Trackers*, and *Pac-Man*) is pretty cool and helps legitimize the technology, but I still can't shake the feeling that connectivity is the poor man's online play. It was also disappointing that some of Nintendo's most anticipated games were not on display. Where were *Mario 128*, the new *Zelda*, *Animal Crossing 2*, and *Metroid Prime 2*? Of course, I still loved what it did have. *Mario Kart* and *F-Zero* are both fantastic, and there were plenty of quality GBA titles (*Mario & Luigi*, *Mario & Donkey Kong*, *Final Fantasy Tactics*, and *Super Mario Advance 4*). But seriously, let's take these games online. ▶

_Phil Theobald is
Reviews Editor at
GameNOW

goers quickly find that the amount of time spent waiting in line to see a game is directly proportional to its hype. *GMR* was in attendance with every sort of backstage, VIP, and off-limits pass imaginable; here are some of the highlights:

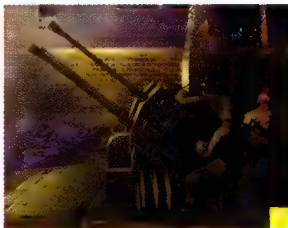
PHONE ALONE

Starting somewhere near the bottom, what proved one of the biggest nonevents of the show was Nokia's game-oriented cell phone, the *N-Gage*. The lack of interest is best summed up by what transpired at the official press conference: To great smoke and fanfare, a young woman lifted her shirt

to reveal the *N-Gage*'s suggested retail price written on her belly. Attendees were not stunned by the impromptu partial nudity, but rather by the fact that it'll cost \$300 to play unimpressive versions of *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* and *Tomb Raider*.

A much bigger (and more welcome) surprise came in upright form. It's not every day that we see all-new arcade machines, especially when the machine has you shuffling spicy tuna rolls back and forth, *Super Puzzle Fighter*-style, across the game screen. Running on Sammy's Atomiswave arcade board (based on Sega's Dreamcast hardware) *Sushi Bar* is begging for a ▶

DISAPPOINTING DEMOS



→ Call us finicky, but a less-than-stellar demo of a game we're looking forward to can seriously color our opinion. Activision didn't show much more than a tech demo of *Call of Duty* (1), bypassing the story elements that should make that game great. We've waited a long time for *Full Throttle II* (2), but the action looked pretty pedestrian. Could that have something to do with the fact Tim Schafer's not working on it? And *Star Fox*'s (3) graphics and gameplay failed to impress, although the ability to climb into any vehicle is pretty cool. Of course, it didn't help that all the developer showed was multiplayer. Consider us officially unimpressed.

MISSING IN ACTION

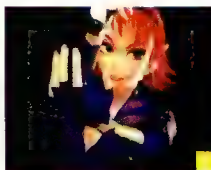
→ Year after year, there are literally thousands of games we don't want to see and inevitably only a small handful that we do. Conspicuous absentees this year included Nintendo's mysterious *Mario 128* (1), *Final Fantasy XII* (2), and the eagerly anticipated follow-up to Sony's *ko*. Rare's faux-anime *Perfect Dark* (3) stayed out of sight, while *Duke Nukem Forever* and Toby Gard's *Galleon* (4) also failed to show up on the show floor in any form. Anywhere. Again.



1



2



3



4



PHOTO BY STEFAN BELVU



→ home conversion. OK, maybe not begging, but we certainly wouldn't mind playing it in the comfort of our living rooms.

GOOD 'N' EVIL

From the very start, we knew **BG&E** was going to be something special; after playing the game last month for our hands-on feature, we were sure of it. How surprised were we when we saw Ubi Soft's E3 build, featuring **BG&E**'s heroine Jade racing across rooftops while airborne ships perforate the area with white-hot plasma fire. It got even better when we saw Jade creeping around inside an enemy base while discovering the brutal truth behind the alien invasion. So as not to spoil any plot points for you, let us



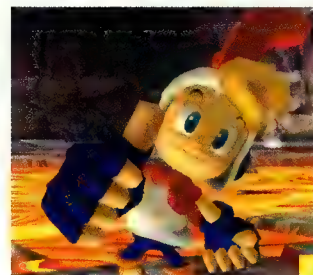
simply say that it was particularly awesome when Jade started sniping valves on the patrolling sentry's jetpack, causing him to tumble out of control through the air. This November is going to be a great month for action-adventure games.

But if we had to pick only one Ubi Soft game to take home with us...well, we couldn't; there were simply too many solid titles to pick from, not to mention that whole theft thing. But even though we saw it before the show, we were still impressed with **Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time**—it looked and played even better than the first time we saw it. Ubi Soft could have another surprise holiday hit on their hands.

On the subject of surprises, one of →

EVIL GENIUS LETS YOU TRAIN MINIONS AND THWART SUPERHEROES IN YOUR BID TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD...

WEIRD AND WACKY



Despite nearly drowning in the vast sea of sequels, we managed to find a small handful of games with fresh new takes on established genres. Sega's **Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg** (1) puts a new spin on 3D platformers, Nintendo's "alternative RPG," **Giftopia** (2) replaces combat with gift-giving and errand running. **Gregory Horror Show** from Capcom fills the traditional haunted house with blocky-headed heroes and horrors, and Vivendi Universal's **Evil Genius** lets you train minions and thwart superheroes in your bid to take over the world (or at least give it your best shot). While we're still excited for *Game We've Played Before 3: The Next Generation*, it's nice to see that some developers are still hashing original ideas.

MONDAY EVENING - JULY 05, 2003

	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	
2	Kirby™: Nightmare in Dream Land ★★★★		GT Advance 3: Pro Concept Racing		Crash Bandicoot® 2 N-Tranced		Yoshi's Island™: Super Mario® Advance 3 ★★★★			2
5	The Incredible Hulk™	Sonic Pinball Party™		The Legend of Zelda®: A Link to the Past®/ Four Swords ★★★★			Bratz™ ◀ (09:50)	Sonic Advance™ 2		5
7	Sega Arcade Gallery™ ◀ (06:30)		Rayman® 3 ◀ (07:45)		High Heat™ Major League Baseball® 2004 ★★★★			Wario Ware,™ Inc.: Mega Microgame\$ ▶		7
9	Justice League™ In Justice for All ★★★★		Super Puzzle Fighter™ II ★★★★			Pokémon® Sapphire Version (09:45) ▶		All-Star Baseball™ 2004		9
11	Wings™ ◀ (06:30)	Ed, Edd n Eddy™ Jawbreakers! ◀ (07:15)		The Legend of Zelda®: Oracle of Ages®		Daredevil™	Pokémon® Ruby Version ★★★★			11
20	Sega Rally™ Championship			The Lost Vikings™		MLB Slugfest® 20-04		Digimon® BattleSpirit		20
26	F1 2002	Lufia®: The Ruins of Lore		X2 Wolverine's™ Revenge ★★★★		Boulder Dash® EX™	Hamtaro™: Ham-Ham Heartbreak			26
32	Samurai Jack™ The Amulet of Time		Donkey Kong Country™		MegaMan™ & Bass ★★★★		◀ Golden Sun™: The Lost Age (09:50)			32
38	Crazy Taxi™ Catch a Ride™ ◀ (06:30)		Ninja Five-O™ ★★★★		Yu-Gi-Oh! Worldwide Edition: Stairway to the Destined Duel			Street Fighter® Alpha 3		38
44	The Legend of Zelda®: Oracle of Seasons™ ★★★★				Metroid® Fusion ★★★★	Advance Wars™	Disney/Pixar Finding Nemo (SEE REVIEW)			44
66	Castlevania® Aria of Sorrow™ ★★★★			Tony Hawk's Pro Skater™ 4 ★★★★		James Bond 007™: Nightfire™ (SEE REVIEW)				66

◀ PROGRAM STARTED BEFORE 7PM

SPORTS

..... SPECIALS

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KNOWLEDGE

P C



→ This year's E3 proved what many of us knew all along: Reports of PC gaming's death have been greatly exaggerated. Not only was *Half-Life 2* pretty much the undisputed game of this year's show, regardless of platform, but a ton of other PC games also garnered positive hype: *DOOM III* (though we just saw a trailer), *Deus Ex 2*, *Star Wars Galaxies*, *The Matrix Online*, *The Sims 2*—the list, amazingly, goes on and on. Yeah, yeah, the consoles had their moments, too. Sure, I'll be buying *Viewtiful Joe* on day one, but this was the PC's year, baby. Get ready to get your geek on as early as this fall, when *Half-Life 2* takes over the world. **IC**

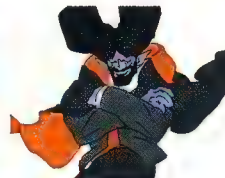
Jeff Green is Editor-in-Chief of *Computer Gaming World*

BEST OF THE BEST:



GAMECUBE

F-Zero GX
Mario Kart: Double Dash
Metal Gear Solid: TTS
Pikmin 2
Viewtiful Joe



GBA

Boktai
Fire Emblem
Mario Advance 4
Mario and Luigi
Metroid: Zero Mission



PC

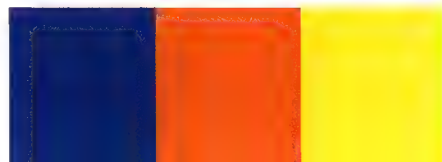
Deus Ex 2
Doom III
Evil Genius
Half-Life 2
Sims 2

UBI SOFT'S *PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME* LOOKED AND PLAYED EVEN BETTER THAN THE FIRST TIME WE SAW IT...

ZEROES AND HEROES

We imagine Factor 5 must be getting sick of the whole *Star Wars* thing by now. **Rogue Squadron III: Rebel Strike** actually marks the fourth surface/space shooter based on the venerable license. Fortunately, it seems that all the new additions will make it the best-being able to zip through the lush forest of Endor on a speederbike is all we really need. That's it, though, Factor 5. After *Rebel Strike*, we want to see something new.

But the true highlights of Nintendo's zoolike booth were the playable debuts of **Mario Kart: Double Dash** and the Sega-developed **F-Zero GX**. Thanks to LAN-enabled network play, the former will surely dominate office playtime, but we'll be looking to *F-Zero* to provide the high-speed thrills we require. From vehicle control to course design to the jaw-dropping visuals, Sega did a superb job with the franchise. If only we had a couple grand to drop on an arcade cabinet of our very own...



GMR'S TOP FIVE GAMES OF E3, BY SYSTEM



PS2

Castlevania: Lament of Innocence
Final Fantasy X-2
Gradius V
Gran Turismo 4
MGS 3: Snake Eater



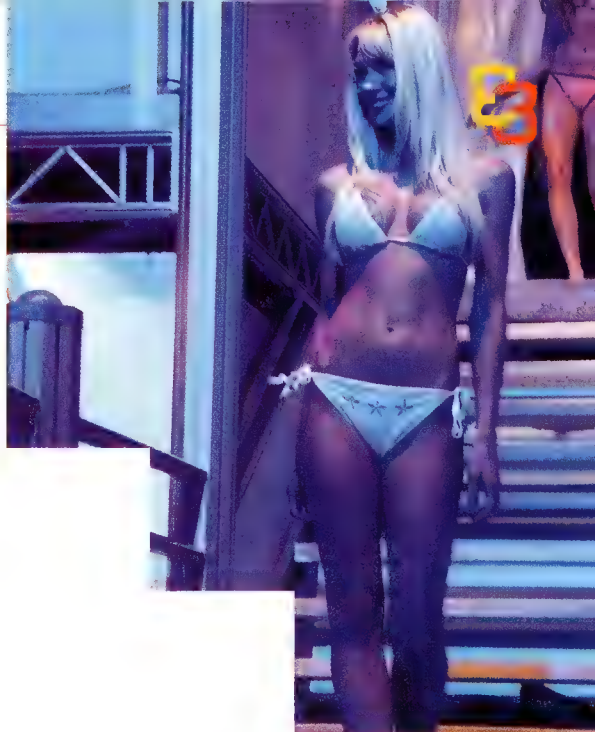
XBOX

B.C.
Crimson Skies: HRR
Halo 2
Ninja Gaiden
True Fantasy Live Online



MULTIPLATFORM

Between Good and Evil
Prince of Persia: SOT
Sonic Heroes
Starcraft: Ghost
SSX 3



CELEBRITY-ATION



→ The best aspect of E3? The opportunity to brush elbows with some of gaming's glitterati...or at least use the urinals after they've finished their business. One of the highlights? Watching Mr. *Metal Gear* himself, Hideo Kojima, demonstrate his newest baby: *Boktai*. In case you missed *GMR #6*, this light-detecting GBA proves that Kojima knows innovation like the palm of his hand. Later, we "stumbled" across Tecmo's *Dead or Alive* Fashion Show, which, curiously, focused solely on ladies' fashions. Bikinis, specifically. After this puzzlingly dull event, Team Ninja's own big boss, Tomonobu Itagaki, demonstrated *Ninja Gaiden*, live and onstage, to a throng of dazzled onlookers. The best part? When hero Ryu encountered a massive skeletal dragon. Unperturbed, Itagaki-san set down the controller and cavalierly strode off the stage to frenzied applause. Simply badass.

While not on the show floor, the latest installment in Capcom's samurai-fied survival-horror series, *Onimusha*, made an appearance behind closed doors. In our opinion, the series has always been a looker, but we're pleased to report that fully 3D backgrounds, a more dynamic camera, and plenty of nice lighting effects have been folded into the mix. The first game's hero, Samanosuke, returns, and is joined by time-traveling soldier Jacques Blanc, as modeled (and possibly voiced) by floppy faced French thespian Jean Reno. Not satisfied with this seemingly incongruous addition to the franchise, the game's creators have given Jacques a lightning-laced whip to wield, which can be used to snag and hurl enemies. Expect dubious translations and plenty of great gameplay sometime in 2004.

BIG BOSSES

Speaking of whips, *Castlevania: Lament of Innocence* ensured that any doubts we may have had about the transition into three dimensions have been sufficiently allayed. Damsels in distress, giant bosses, and gothic architecture are all included. Players will even be privy to the very first time the very first Belmont cracks a whip, courtesy of

a mysterious, hermetic alchemist.

Of course, *Castlevania* wasn't the biggest Konami game at the show... As we first revealed to the universe in our last issue, *MGS3: Snake Eater* is the real deal. But watching Kojima's 12-minute action-packed trailer blew us away. The best aspects of the game were the humorous touches woven into the seemingly serious proceedings. When Snake walks up to a soldier attempting to start his motorcycle and sidecar, the soldier turns and says "What is this? Another *Grand Theft Auto*?" earning a puzzled look from Snake. "This isn't *Vice City*," continues the soldier as he strands the ruffled Snake by the roadside, causing the audience—and us—to erupt into applause.

While *MGS3* could well prove to be 2004's action-adventure king, it looks **→**

KNOWLEDGE
PLAYSTATION

← The best thing about E3 this year wasn't the fact that Sony practically stole Nintendo's lunch by announcing the PSP. Nope, the reason I loved E3 was exactly the reason many newspapers and TV shows didn't seem to like the show: It was very much for gamers. No huge event, no huge announcement, no launch. There were just lots of games. Good ones, too. For me, the biggest highlight was undoubtedly *Need for Speed Underground*. That the team at EA has completely reinvented the franchise is both exciting and refreshing. **←**
_John Davison is Editor-in-Chief of Official PlayStation Magazine.





←Impressive Xbox titles came from around the globe: Microsoft's own London-based developer Intrepid has something extremely special in *B.C.*. Complex systems work to create a living, breathing dinosaur-infested world that's perfectly ripe for exploration. Bungie's *Halo 2* was somehow able to match the enormous hype generated in the months leading up to the show, and *True Fantasy Live Online's* polished, persistent online world provided one of the finest MMORPG experiences on display. Ubi Soft had an astounding *Prince of Persia* sequel, and Korea's NCsoft, whose *Crusaders: Kingdom Under Fire* and slew of MMORPGs clarified that this is indeed one of the brightest new talents emerging in the industry. Curiously absent from the first-party lineup was Double Fine's forthcoming *Psychonauts*, which, after much critical acclaim at last year's E3, was not shown (even in video form) at Microsoft's booth. All in all, it was a strong show, and one proving that Xbox is here to stay. **LE**

Evan Shamoon is Editor-in-Chief of Xbox Nation.



→ as though Sony's flagship series should continue the PS2's reign as the console for casual gamers. The actual hands-on time we got with *Gran Turismo 4* at the show proved that the game is getting closer to driving perfection than we could possibly imagine. The game looks and feels better than ever and has insanely realistic graphics and physics. On top of that, it's online. Take that *Sega GT*. But the experience of playing the game won't be complete without the Logitech Driving Force Pro, which not only features snazzy leather styling and a built-in gear shifter, but turns a full 900 degrees for real wheel-spinning action. Oh, Fahrvergnugen.



→ Whether we were sitting in Nintendo's supertronic *F-Zero* arcade machine or standing in line to get another shot at Sammy's mighty trio of Atomiswave-powered arcade games *Sushi Bar* (1), *Demolish Fist* (2), or *Dolphin Blue*, we were sure of one thing: Arcades (or at least, games) live!

GT4 may have been great, but for those willing to wait in the long line to see it, *Half-Life 2* completely stole the show. Displaying some mind-numbing new technology (the facial animation stuff was especially impressive), a September release seems absurdly, if tantalizingly imminent. We really hope it makes it. But what really got us all worked up was the cool *War of the Worlds* inspired enemies, such as the gargantuan "striders" upon whose spindly legs one unlucky freedom fighter was skewered. We simply can't wait. But we will.

What's left? Only the untold terrors of Kentia Hall. What's that? Read on... but only if you're *really* curious. Seriously. **LE**



THE WORST OF

WE SEND IN OUR NOT-SO-STEALTHY AGENTS TO SNIFF OUT THE CRAP. HERE'S THEIR FULL REPORT.



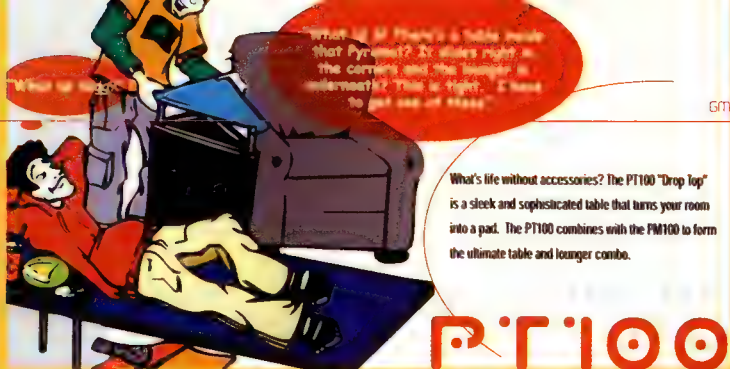
With an event as large as the Electronic Entertainment Expo, a small staff of magazine writers doesn't have enough time (sure, some might say desire) to see absolutely everything the games industry has to offer. That's why we asked regular *GMR* contributors and superfriends Erik Wolpaw and Seanbaby to do our dirty work for us. That plan lasted all of five minutes before they bolted for the wacky confines of Kientia Hall, home of people dressed in panda suits speaking broken English to hawk games you'd never even think about playing. Ultimately, their report didn't do too much to lighten our workload, but it's funny, so we're printing it anyway.

IT STARTS HERE...

As you can imagine, when it's 80 degrees and thousands of people are rubbing up against each other in the center of a toxic smog dome, it creates some health problems. As long as you're already busy imagining, imagine now that half of those people spent the previous night at strip clubs getting their taps buffed by sex-worker thighs and the other half coughed on all the way over from Asia. Also, remember that these are game enthusiasts, a species whose hygiene standards fall somewhere between fourth-century Mongolians and fourth-century Mongolians eating dysentery.

To put it in cinematic terms, if *The Perfect Storm* were about bacterial infections instead of the majesty of dead fishermen, it would have been set in the primordial disease soup of E3—"Where business gets fun!"—and then would have gotten galloping tuberculosis. The point is, without the slogan, it's hard to take anything very seriously or really be able to tell what the hell it's supposed to be about in the first place.

Our goal this year, other than first-class hilarity along the highway of outrageousness, was to continue not having Ebola. The most important part of that plan was to avoid the main halls.



SHOWTIME3
GMA 6



What's life without accessories? The PT100 "Drop Top" is a sleek and sophisticated table that turns your room into a pad. The PT100 combines with the PM100 to form the ultimate table and lounge combo.

PT100



→ completely. Sure, that's where the good games are, but they're also a perfect breeding ground for disease: hot, dark, humid, and packed with people from filthy lands where life is cheap. Like Detroit! HA! [Per one of our slogans, that was just some outrageousness. In all seriousness, we actually mean places like China.]

The brightest, airiest, and least-crowded exhibit hall—the one that seemed least likely to result in some kind of hemorrhagic fever—was Kentia, the famous home of booths filled with grim, swarthy people smoking hookahs and selling Commodore 64 educational software called *I Love Spell!* Kentia is best summed up by this quote: "The energy of the stars becomes us. We become the energy of the stars. Stardust and spirit unite and we begin: one with the universe." Although it sounds just like a brochure describing a Korean game about dating a 10-year-old girl who lives in your cell phone, that's actually U.S. congressman, native English speaker, and Democratic presidential hopeful Dennis Kucinich. We don't know what the hell he's talking about, but it definitely captures the optimistic can-do-thought-we-can't-quite-express-it spirit of Kentia Hall.

KENTIA HELL

Besides its brochures on CD packaging and its glorious misuse of our language, Kentia is known for its accessories. And while there are quite a few booths that do nothing but display Game Boy cables and pamphlets on Game Boy cable marketing and distribution, there are also a large number of mad inventors unveiling controllers and peripherals that allow you to type with one hand, blast yourself with electric shocks, or control games using only the power of your face. The great thing is that every year, Kentia gets all-new mad inventors with all-new devices. This is either because the bottom is constantly falling out of the mind-controller/one-handed-typing industry or because—and this is much more

likely—at the end of each year, all the Kentia inventors return to their distant futures.

ENGULFED IN FUN

According to the Mushaburui press kit, careful costing has gone into the Mushaburui, so no safety is posed for its daredevil pilots. This year, we found a \$300 chair with a cockpit simulator and the "product designation" of Mushaburui. As it was demonstrated by a bored Japanese man feigning driving excitement, it did nothing to change the psychic vision we both share of a world where people don't play videogames from a lawn chair, glued to a steering wheel. However, its brochure says its name is defined as "to tremble with eagerness (to fight)," and we both agree that the foreign-dictionary scientist who came up with that kick-ass definition be in charge of describing everything when Dennis Kucinich becomes president.

COLD CHILLIN'

What up, playa! The next fly-ass generation of tight, kickin'-back gaming gear is here: The Pyramat. And even though its product catalog features a series of cartoons proving that the Pyramat can be used by straight-up G's speaking today's hottest street dialects, dawg, we think the majority of its users will be people who decided the strain of playing Nintendo and sitting up at the same time was too exhausting. We were anxious to know if it came with an attachment to dispense frosting directly into our mouths while we played, or if it were perhaps a way to control games with snoring. According to the way the kids in the ad are communicating with thought bubbles, the most amazing thing about the Pyramat—next to how it combines the thrill of murder simulators with the thrill of lying down—is the way it lets you communicate telepathically. This saves you a lot of exhausting jaw exercise and guarantees that your mouth won't remain all



→ The average outsider probably thinks E3 is all fun n' games, when in reality it's a never-ending series of carefully disguised lethal contraptions designed to reduce the number of gaming journalists in this world, one at a time. Whether Death arrives at your doorstep in the form of a man-eating chair, as a Marie Antoinette "simulator," or dressed up as a Russian Cossack attempting to slice open your intestines, it is coming. Make no mistake.

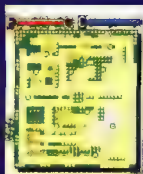
muscular, potentially ruining the gelatinous blob symmetry of the rest of your body. Erik added that he would be very interested in an add-on that could keep his fried chicken warm while he was concentrating on the bedpan attachment, like the one he was enjoying. The look on the representative's face revealed that we were no longer welcome at the Pyramat booth and that Erik had actually taken a super fly crap in the hella chill PT100 "Drop Top" end table, plays.

THE NOT-SO-BIG SCREEN

One of man's most basic desires is to fly like a bird. Imagine if after the Wright brothers had already invented the airplane, another company addressed this desire to soar through the clouds by creating a ball of fishhooks that flew up your urethra. That's pretty much what's happened here. For years, people wished they could play Game Boy on a big screen. A company—kind of the Wright brothers of videogames—invents a device that lets you play Game Boy on your big-ass television. A few years later, undaunted by the fact that the problem had already been completely solved, another company invents a device that lets you project your Game Boy onto a screen slightly smaller than an average television, but with the added benefit that the projected image is washed-out and blurry. Rather than being an idea so crazy that it just might work, the Game Boy Projector is an idea so crazy that it's just extra crazy. On the other hand, if you need to elaborate on a slide in your PowerPoint presentation by making the board of directors watch you play *Donkey Kong* for 10 minutes, this could be an indispensable business tool.

BIGEYE TUNA

"Hello wave of fu-ture time is mobile phone game!!" As Korea is anxious to have us believe, mobile phone games are the wave of the future. Or to state that in a more Korean ad-copy way, "Soon mobile game bigeye tuna excrete hand pleasure!!" Truly, they are the masters of hyping games. You see, the problem with so many big-budget E3 booths is that they blast every one of your senses with their game so much that you're sick of it before you ever get a chance to try it.



Imagine being pamphlet-flogged by the *Urban Freestyle Street Soccer* booth babes and dragged to the ground by 70 pounds of *Urban Freestyle Street Soccer* promo key chains and executive stress balls, only to look up and find you've accidentally entered the *Urban Freestyle Street Soccer* laser show and hot-dog-eating showdown. You'll sooner play a game about how many swarming ants you can fit on your groin than one about urban freestyle street soccer.

However, with a Korean game, you can read its 35-page press release, and chances are it'll still be a mystery. In the videogame industry, you have a better chance at finding a tap-dancing bigfoot holding a thousand-dollar bill than you do of finding a person who speaks both Korean and English. And this year, mobile-phone game developers, olarks, and moises were the standouts both in creating games a million miles on the other side of our people's cultural gap and describing them with randomly selected words smashed together in no particular order. That said, their catalog may—if we're translating their attacks on our English language correctly—solve many of the problems facing mobile-phone gamers today.

WRONG NUMBER

What are mobile-phone games missing, besides graphics, gameplay, sound, and fun? More controversial issues. No one is shocked by ghosts chasing a woman through a maze of dots anymore. When we're between calls, we need to be shocked with the unmentionable horrors of the world. And *Rescue Eve* does exactly that. From what we can puzzle through, you and Eve are

attacked by evil jungle men in black face who "lay down you first"—and then have their way with Eve. It's like sexual assault and racism gave your phone a call with FUN on the other line!

I'M A SLAVE 4 U

Another of the biggest problems we had with our cell phones is that they weren't active participants in our romantic fantasies. We're not sure if *I Love U* is the answer to this, since, although love is the universal language, Korea somehow managed to make it indecipherable. "There is my own girl in the mobile phone. Cyber lover will tempt you. Now your own lover will whisper love. I Love U." We don't know what it means exactly, but we both feel comfortable saying that my phone is only about two or three dates away from making passionate love to Erik.

After six hours spent playing and talking about every title in the Entertainment Liquidators of Canada booth, such as *Fatty Bear Birthday Surprise*, *Nerf Arena Blast*, and *Smart Sex with Sue*, we decided to risk a quick trip into one of the main halls. In addition to catching a rupturing, wet snootfull of E. coli, we figured we'd see some ambitious, advanced games. Instead, we found an ambitious, advanced version of the naked child theme that was only vaguely hinted at in the nonsensical Koreaagish of Kentia. We have no idea what game this mostly naked magical boy was supposed to be advertising, but we do know that we don't want any part of it. Except to play it—but only if it's fun!

DOORWAY TO HEAVEN

We never found out exactly what this company made, but the door smelled like Souvlaki, which was pretty excellent. **IC**
Seanbaby and Eric Wolpaw



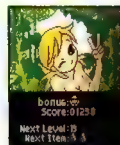
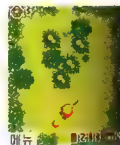
There is my own girl in the mobile phone
한라봉

이 게임은...
이 게임은...
이 게임은...

Rescue Eve

Game Genre : Shooting (Everyone & Adult Version)
Game Type : Stand-alone
File Size : About 64Kb
Color Depth : 256 Color†

- Protect Eve while you across the forest.
- Black native lay down you first and rape Eve.
- All stages are 20s.
- After the Ending shown, stage will be continued for your best record.
- Don't forget re-load your gun after 5fires.



...s Expo logo are

ZIFF DAVIS MEDIA



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HOW WE RATE

YOUR GUIDE TO THE GMR SCORING SYSTEM

1 KING OF THE HILL 2 WHITEHOT 3 BOMBER 4 FANTASY 5 RAMPAGE 6 BOMB STUFF 7 RECOMMENDED 8 ESSENTIAL 9 MUST HAVE 10 IT'S A GOOD GAME

At GMR, we eat, sleep, drink, and occasionally secrete games. If we say something is a crap sandwich, then don't eat it. If we award it our prestigious Essential Selection award, then you can take your lunch money and blow it on some effervescent digital gaming hoo-ha. Don't hate. Celebrate.

WARNING! WHERE MULTIPLE VERSIONS OF A GAME ARE REVIEWED, GMR WILL MENTION DIFFERENCES ONLY IF THEY SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT THE GAMEPLAY!



BRUTE FORCE

THE A-TEAM. IN SPACE. HEY, WAIT! COME BACK!

MATURE | XBOX

PUBLISHER: MICROSOFT
DEVELOPER: DIGITAL ANVIL
PRICE: \$49.99
RELEASE: AVAILABLE NOW
PLAYERS: 1-4
ORIGIN: U.S.A.

➔ While one would have a hard time seeing *Brute Force* as a *Halo* clone, the latter game nonetheless casts a long shadow over all science-fiction-themed Xbox shooters. *Brute Force* isn't trying to be the title that makes Xbox gamers forget *Halo*, but it is trying to appeal to those fans—albeit with a different angle. *Brute Force* is all about the team, and in many ways, the game is successful in creating believable behaviors for your squad mates, as well as some interesting weapons and special powers. Unfortunately, the game

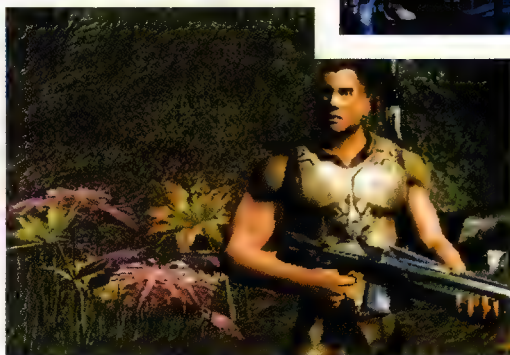
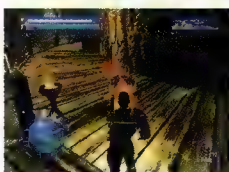
falters badly in almost everything else, from its unironically corny story to its gratingly boring level design.

Brute Force is named after the squad of highly trained and unique special operatives you conduct throughout the game. The characters are pretty run-of-the-mill, with the mandatory big tough guy; the wily, stealthy hot chick; and, of course, the big alien dude who runs like a dog—every game has to have one of those. None of them has much personality, and neither does much else in the game. It feels like Digital Anvil

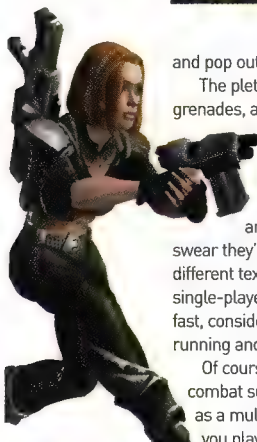
needed to go an extra step and make this game a really over-the-top farce, like a bad '50s sci-fi movie.

You control only one soldier at a time, but you can easily keep track of your three other teammates and switch among them with the D-pad. You can also give them simple commands like "cover me" or "hold this position," but in general, they don't need a lot of hand holding. Credit some really well-written A.I. code, one of the game's bright points. Enemy A.I. isn't as impressive, relying mostly on the classic "hide behind a rock

XB



→ *Brute Force's* environments are uninspired to say the least. All amount to little more than a series of canyons and gullies that conduct you from one enemy to the next. The only level that looks different is Brutus' home world, which evokes thoughts of Chewbacca's home world of Kashyyyk, which reminds us of the *Star Wars Christmas Special*, and that makes us nauseous.



and pop out to fire" routine.

The plethora of wildly different guns, grenades, and other items combined with the special modes unique to each character makes for some pretty fun shoot-em-up action, but the linear levels are so repetitive that one would swear they're all the same, just with different textures and objects. And the single-player campaign gets boring pretty fast, considering it's hardly more than just running and shooting.

Of course, *Brute Force's* squad-based combat suggests its greatest appeal is as a multiplayer game. So why can't you play it over Xbox Live? Oh, you

can download content, like new maps, but you don't want maps. You want multiplayer. But the only way to play multiplayer is on the same machine or over a system link. It makes you wonder just how much Microsoft really believes in Xbox Live when a major release like this doesn't support its most desirable feature. Sitting on the couch with your pals playing Co-op is fun (and not seen in enough games), but an Internet option would make a world of difference.

Despite some well-done presentation and solid controls, major missteps in the level design and entire multiplayer system cause *Brute Force* to lose all the fun from what should be

ROGUES GALLERY

Who's Who in the World of Brute Force:

Tex: Your standard-issue burly main man, Tex favors the big guns with the big firepower and taking care of situations by blasting everything into a fine red mist. He goes in with miniguns ablazin'. His special-attack mode lets him fire both guns at once.

Playing him in the movie: Vin Diesel

Flint: What up, badass sister girl? Flint will snipe your ass from 100 meters and not even think twice about it. She's so sharp that her special attack lets her one-shot fools from the hip.

Playing her in the movie: Lil' Kim

Hawk: Hawk is one stealthy mama. She'll sneak up behind you and cut your heart out without you even knowing it (sounds like my ex). Her secret power lets her go invisible for stealth missions. Too bad there aren't any in the game.

Playing her in the movie: any crazy hot chick will do

Brutus: Brutus is an alien with a shotgun. He runs a bit like a dog, which may be the source of his perpetual grumpiness. Or maybe it's the scaly skin. Brutus is strong, so strong, he can kill dudes by just touching them in his special state.

Playing him in the movie: Bruce Vilanch



a great time for you and your friends. Digital Anvil has a better reputation (*Freelancer* and *Starlancer*) than this game suggests—this is really subpar work for them. It's a shame, really, because there seems to be a good seed of a game in here somewhere, but apparently no one bothered to water it. **C-**

—Tom Price

GMR UNDERWHELMING **6/10**

BETTER THAN: X-FORCE .ER, SQUAD
NOT AS GOOD AS: RETURN/CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN
WAIT FOR IT: HALO 2

2ND OPINION

To be honest, I don't think "the power of Xbox" is being put to much use here. The graphics are mediocre and the character design is WERK. People shooting stuff at a lizard-like alien. Not much special agents? Wow! Never seen that before! A distraction for now, but absolutely forgettable later on. **C-** James Maize



SILENT LINE: AC

UNLIKELY TO WIN NEW CONVERTS

TEEN | PS2

➔ From Software's *Silent Line: Armored Core*, dutifully shaken down and prepped for North America courtesy of Agetec, features a familiar number of compelling constants. The most significant is the ridiculously deep catalog of robotic parts and pieces you use to fashion thousands of possible mech combinations.

The game also includes the now-standard arena-based ladder competitions (where you face foe after foe in an attempt to reach the pinnacle of Core rankings) and the Mission mode, which thrusts your mech into a bidding war for your services, as solicited by a small handful of warring corporations.

The gameplay, as always, is viewed from a third-person perspective (although a first-person mode has been added as an optional default setting), requiring you to maneuver your Core around a series of industrial environments—typically with the goal of destroying a specific number of enemies. The Cores control as well as you'd expect them to (kind of like driving a Cadillac), and the graphics are top-notch, featuring

gorgeously detailed mechs and destructible environments. It's not as fast as *Virtual-On*, but it's no sluggish *Steel Battalion*, either.

The best of the new additions is the ability to specifically target your enemy's weapons parts, but despite the upgrades to an already solid system and the ability to import mech data from *Armored Core 3*, the series needs some new ideas. A stronger Story mode with cut-scenes that highlight the exploits of your customized Core would make for a good start and a more involving experience. Maybe next time.

As solid as ever, but unlikely to win new converts, *Silent Line: Armored Core* preaches to the choir and no one else. **C-**

—James Mielke

PUB	AGETEC	PRICE	\$39.99
DEV	FROM SOFTWARE	PLAYERS	1-4 (w/Link)
REL	AVAILABLE NOW	ORIGIN	JAPAN

GMR 7/10

BETTER THAN: VIRTUAL-ON
 NOT AS FRESH AS: PHANTOM CRASH
 WAIT FOR IT: STEEL BATTALION: POC



APE ESCAPE 2

THOSE DEVIOUS MONKEYS ARE BACK

TEEN | PS2

➔ The original *Ape Escape* was the first game to require a Dual Shock controller, showing us all a great new way to control our games. While the Dual Shock may not be as novel five years later, *Ape Escape*'s play mechanics remain as strong as ever.

Spector, the first game's albino monkey overlord, is back and is rewriting human history in his image. Playing as Jimmy, you must travel through time to capture all of the escaped monkeys using 11 unique gadgets. And even though Jimmy is the hero, the 300 monkeys are the real stars of the game, and they come in all sorts of crazy new outfits, including vampires, clowns, and disco kings. Leading the simian masses are five *Power Rangers*-esque monkeys, providing humorous if relatively unchallenging boss interludes.

Using the gadgets, Jimmy hunts monkeys in 27 well-designed levels, each featuring a monkified theme, unique platforming challenges, and plenty of opportunities for exploration. All the gadgets from the original game are here, as well as three new ones that unfortunately don't add much to the gameplay. Many of the level themes are from the first game, and combined with the reused gadgets, it creates a sense of déjà vu. Also of minor annoyance is the clunky gadget-switching interface, which has been mysteriously downgraded from

the sleeker, on-the-fly version found in the Japanese release.

Graphically, *Ape Escape 2* isn't on par with recent platform offerings like *Sly Cooper* and *Ratchet and Clank*, but the images remain solid and colorful. The sound is similarly solid; of particular note is the surprisingly good localization, which stars the voices of Ash and Misty from the *Pokémon* cartoon series.

Ape Escape 2 is a lot of fun, but if it has one problem, it's that it is too similar to the previous game. But hey, the first game was great, so this is hardly a damning complaint and won't be an issue for most. Why Sony didn't pick it up is beyond us, but kudos to Ubi Soft for recovering its fumble. **B-**

—Michael Vreeland

PUB	UBI SOFT	PRICE	\$39.99
DEV	SOEJ	PLAYERS	1
REL	JULY 2002	ORIGIN	JAPAN

GMR 7/10

BETTER THAN: RAYMAN 3
 NOT AS GOOD AS: MARIO SUNSHINE
 WAIT FOR IT: JAK II

[CHIMP FUN]

While it never came out here, another *Ape Escape* game was released in Japan in 2001 known as *Piposaru 2001*. This time Jimmy is charged with the sweet, sweet deal of cleaning all of the monkeys' pants. To do so, he has to chase down 2,001 monkeys and literally suck the pants off of them with a vacuum cleaner. We are not making this up. In addition to his trusty vacuum cleaner, Jimmy had a number of other items he could use to get shyer monkeys into the open, such as bananas (love dem!) and bombs. **C-**



BIG MUTHA TRUCKERS

DON'T HITCH THIS RIDE

TEEN | PS2 [REVIEWED] | GC | XBOX | PC

➔ Simple mathematics tells us that inbred hicks equals fun, and inbred hicks driving huge trucks and smashing things up equals great fun. Sadly, inbred hicks driving huge trucks and smashing things up plus economic simulation equals **Big Mutha Truckers**.

Crusty Ma Jackson, who's older than dirt, plans to retire and leave her trucking business to one of her four redneck kids. As one of the Jackson four, you drive your rigs back and forth between five cities, buying low and selling high in an attempt to win control of Ma's company. Driving provides the meat of play—it's possible to plow through traffic, destroying cop cars and vans, running motorcycles into dividers, and bashing through obstacles.

Mild challenges crop up when the bikers or cops get pissed and begin chasing your truck and demanding destruction. Bikers even foolishly climb onto a truck's trailer and attempt to dislodge it from the cabin, forcing players to maneuver frantically in hopes

of shaking them off. It's also possible to challenge opposing truckers from city to city, but the A.I. drivers are easily beaten, especially after their initial lead is conquered.

Truckers' economics requires players to drive to five nondescript cities, purchase commodities, and haul them to another city. If hauling junk from A to B holds any sort of appeal, it withers in record time. You must tote your cargo over 60 game days, and it's most likely that by day 20, you'll have upgraded your rig, visited every city at least three times, experienced *Truckers'* lame challenges, and posed the question, "Why me, Lord?"

—Greg Orlando

PUB: EMPIRE INTERACTIVE PRICE: \$19.99
DEV: BTECHNIX PLAYERS: 1
REL. AVAILABLE NOW ORIGIN: U.K.

GMR SEMI-INFLATED
4¹⁰

BETTER THAN: KING OF ROUTE 66
NOT AS GOOD AS: AMERICAN PRO TRUCKER
WAIT FOR IT: TO SLIP QUICKLY INTO BARGAIN BINS



NAVAL OPS: WG

IN A LEAGUE OF ITS OWN

TEEN | PS2

➔ In *Naval Ops: Warship Gunner*, players become captain, helmsman, gunner, and a sort of sea-based Luke Skywalker all in one. They control all functions of a ship that has mysteriously passed into an alternate universe, which looks very much like Earth, but is ruled by an evil empire called simply **The Empire**.

Combat missions require a captain to steer the ship, manage its speed, select its weapons, aim and fire its guns, and fire off antitorpedo, missile, and plane countermeasures, all in real-time. If it sounds like a lot to do while a concentrated enemy is pounding away with its guns—well, it is. Players will find themselves challenged and likely overwhelmed by the intense demands of this game's mission-based action stages. Autosteering for individual targets and computer-controlled allies ease the difficulty somewhat, but those sailing *Gunner's* seas should nonetheless expect to feel like Davy

Jones at times, visiting the locker again and again under a hail of fire.

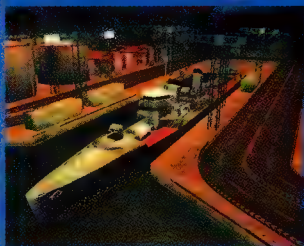
Ships can be modified and improved, making *Gunner* as deep as it is thick, and it rewards successful captains with a slew of high-tech upgrades that make the sailing substantially more fun, if not a drop easier. Players have access to about 200 ship types and hundreds of weapons, engines, hulls, radar setups, and planes. The strategy serves as a fine complement to the otherwise problematic action, and, ultimately, *Gunner* hits its mark—but just barely.

—Greg Orlando

PUB: KOEI PRICE: \$49.99
DEV: MICROCABIN PLAYERS: 1
REL. AVAILABLE NOW ORIGIN: JAPAN

GMR LUKEWARM
6¹⁰

BETTER THAN: DIVE ATTACK (NEO-GEO POCKET COLOR)
NOT AS GOOD AS: P.T.O. IV
WAIT FOR IT: P.T.O. V





DEV. UNIVERSAL INTERACTIVE
PUB. RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT
REL. AVAILABLE NOW

PRICE \$49.99
PLAYERS 1
COUNTRY U.S.A.

GMR 6¹⁰

BETTER THAN: X2: WOLVERINE'S REVENGE
WORSE THAN: SPIDER-MAN
WAIT FOR IT: X-MEN: LEGENDS

THE HULK JUST SHY OF SMASHING

TEEN | XBOX [REVIEWED] | PC | PS2 | GC

➔ If adorable Kermit the Frog has taught us anything, it's that it's not easy being green. In the case of the verdant-skinned comic hero Hulk, he's had to sit on the sidelines while heroes such as Batman, Spider-Man, and the X-Men received the videogame treatment, even if it was horrible treatment indeed.

Now, with Hulkmania running wild, Marvel's resident behemoth gets his own 3D beat-em-up/stealth fusion game. Players alternately control the brutish Hulk as he smashes all those opposing him, and his puny alter ego, Bruce Banner, in the game's stealth stages. The developers must be applauded for their effort to smoothly blend these two disparate play styles into one game, but *Hulk* remains an uneven effort because the fighting is so good while the sneaking is downright disappointing.

As the Hulk, players can access a good crop of moves and throws. Enemies can be stunned with a huge clap from Hulk's hands or hurled with

great force into anything in the environment. As Hulk fights, stuff gets broken and can be picked up, smashed on enemies, or similarly tossed. Combat never really loses its luster here, simply because the game seldom requires the Hulk to kill all foes before moving on. It's perfectly acceptable, and indeed even good strategy, to run away. In this way, the developers have neatly avoided one of the pitfalls of the standard beat-em-up: tedium.

Gorgeous graphics that look almost cel-shaded make the game appear to be a real-time comic book. The fantasy shatters, though, during the Banner-themed stages. As Banner, players must avoid idiotic guards who forget about him once he runs past a corner, and engage in silly minigames requiring fast button-pressing skills. These stages—and there are enough of them to detract from the overall whole—reek of someone's poor planning. If only Hulk had smashed him....

Greg Orlando

MIDNIGHT CLUB II MIDNIGHT IN A FAMILIAR WORLD

TEEN | XBOX [REVIEWED] | PS2

➔ There's not a lot to say about the Xbox version of *Midnight Club II*—Rockstar's arcade-style street racer—that we didn't say in our review of the PS2 version (GMR #6). Sure, Xbox's superior processing muscle means the game looks and runs a bit better, but what does a slightly smoother framerate really get you these days besides a reduction in your postgame headaches. The content is otherwise unchanged, so if you've played the PS2 version, you've essentially played the Xbox version. Still, if you only have an Xbox, you won't want to miss out on what your PS2 fanboy friends have been playing.

So, what features do Xbox gamers get with this version other than improved graphics? They get HDTV support, including widescreen. They get Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound so they can hear cars behind them honking their horns in futility. They get Xbox Live support, which brings with it the voice capabilities built into that network, as

well as online-ranking features (you better get something extra if you have to pay for it). Most noticeably, Xbox players get a four-player splitscreen mode so friends can race against each other in the rumpled room without going online.

If you're already enjoying this game on PS2, there's no hard reason to pick up this version. And if you're not enjoying the PS2 game, there's really nothing about this version that will change your mind. But if you just like insanely fast arcade racing, go ahead and pick it up. It's a gas.

Tom Price

DEV. ROCKSTAR
PUB. ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO
REL. JUNE 2003

PRICE \$49.99
PLAYERS 1-8
COUNTRY U.S.A.

GMR 8¹⁰

PRETTY MUCH THE SAME AS: MIDNIGHT CLUB II PS2
NOT AS GOOD AS: BURNOUT 2 ON XBOX
WAIT FOR IT: NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND



XB

PC

PS2

GC

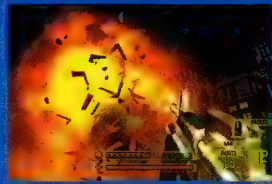
S.O.F. II MISSING IN ACTION

MATURE | XBOX

➔ For starters, *SOFII: Double Helix* performs well. You've got a variety of levels to play through, and despite a snore-inducing story line in the single-player campaign, there's decent mission variety, ranging from kill to kill some more with 15-plus weapons and devastatingly gory results. Mercifully, the enemy A.I. is pretty good and provides a decent challenge.

The bad news is this: The game's graphics look dated. Most characters are blocky and reek of a poor PC port job. And Xbox Live support, which is the reason you'd really want to buy this game, needs an overhaul. Online performance can fluctuate every time you log on; in fact, *SOFII* can get mighty choppy, mighty quick. And the voice chat requires you to call up a menu and select the channel to talk on. More often than not, we were just switching channels and muttering to ourselves. When it comes down to it, skip *SOFII* and pick up *Tides of War* instead. **C-**

Darren Gladstone



PUB: ACTIVISION
DEV: GRATUITOUS GAMES
REL: JUNE 2003

PRICE: \$49.99
PLAYERS: 1-16
OS: G4X
U.S.A.

GMR 6 SOLDIER ON

BETTER THAN: FORTUNE—THE MAGAZINE
NOT AS GOOD AS: WOLFENSTEIN (AGAIN)
WAIT FOR IT: COUNTER-STRIKE (XBOX)



➔ The *Risk*-style map of the single-player mode lends several strategic elements to the game. Special resources are gained by storming new territories.



RISE OF NATIONS

BIG HUGE RTS

TEEN | PC

PUBLISHER: MICROSOFT
DEVELOPER: BIG HUGE GAMES
PRICE: \$49.99
RELEASE: AVAILABLE NOW
PLAYERS: 1-8
ORIGIN: U.S.A.

➔ The real-time strategy genre has spawned so many games that most new titles feel stale and all too familiar. With the recent release of *Rise of Nations*, Brian Reynolds, the brains behind classics like *Civilization II* and *Alpha Centauri*, brings some of his turn-based magic to the RTS genre.

Many of *RON*'s conventions come from its turn-based cousins. There are trade routes, huge tech trees, and a host of other factors. Most noticeable is the use of national borders, which are zones of control around your cities. You may build only within this zone, and enemies will suffer attrition damage inside it. This adds a stately feel to the game, and empires often fight over

stretches of barren land simply to extend their borders and therefore increase tax revenue.

The single-player campaign doesn't have a story; instead, you focus on conquering the world over a *Risk*-style map. It's enjoyable, but nothing special. *RON* shines in multiplayer, since this mode allows for varied strategies and has a myriad of available settings, including 18 unique civilizations and room for up to eight players. The only problem is that games created through GameSpy can be somewhat unreliable.

Still, *RON* remains a typical RTS. You build cities, collect resources, and then throw your masses at the other guy's mob until one of them gives way. The

2ND OPINION

Rise of Nations seems like the perfect combination of the fast-paced real-time strategy *Age of Empires* and the deeply detailed *Civilization*. Both games represent two sides of the strategy-game coin, but *Nations* somehow makes a perfect blend of the two. It just may be the most intriguing strategy game yet. **C+**

—Tom Price

REVIEWS YOU CAN TRUST

rise of nations → total war: viking invasion



extras aren't always conducive to great gameplay, as there's often too much to handle on normal speed settings. Units and features such as commandos, spies, and flank damage are relegated to the sidelines for most players.

Playing *Rise of Nations* won't make your jaw drop in amazement, but you'll probably still have lots of fun as long as you like RTS games. **C**

Di Luo

GMR GIVES US A RISE 8/10

BETTER THAN: EMPIRE EARTH
ON PAR WITH: AGE OF MYTHOLOGY
WAIT FOR IT: EMPIRE: DAWN OF THE MODERN ERA



→ As with the *Civilization* series, cities form the centerpiece of every *Rise of Nations* empire. Not only do they determine national borders, but they also determine where most civic buildings can be built. Lose a city, and you lose all of its economic advantages. Fortunately, they can't be destroyed, even by nukes, and they can only be captured by enemy infantry after its hit points have been reduced.

[PICK A NATION]

Some of the 18 nations in *Rise of Nations* stand out for specific play styles. Here are some recommendations:

Rushing: Aztecs gain resources for slaying enemies and are ideal for war. The Japanese are also good because of their samurai and farming bonuses.

Balanced: Both the British and Germans have good economic and military bonuses, making them ideal for the balanced approach.

Defensive: The Egyptians, Chinese, and Koreans are good defensive civilizations. They have production bonuses, which favor a slow approach and wars of attrition. **C**

NOW



TOTAL WAR: VIKING INVASION

TEEN | PC

➔ **Medieval:** *Total War—Viking Invasion* follows in the *Total War* tradition of masterful scope and design. The expansion's most prominent feature is the Dark Age campaign, which deftly brings *Medieval: Total War* into the eighth century, when Viking raiders reigned supreme.

Additionally, it provides a variety of enhancements and tweaks to both the Campaign and 3D tactical-combat games, including streamlined tech trees, with more building types and improved management, 25 additional combat units, an epic historical 3D battle, and three new factions for the original campaigns. *Viking Invasion* also introduces a rather swift prebattle system. It's a welcome addition for *Total War* players who want better control of forces and reinforcements. You're also able to save a game before the fighting begins—just in case things don't go accordingly. Strategy and *Total War* fans should add *Viking Invasion* to their collection. Thine king commands it. **C**

Raphael Liberatore



PUB ACTIVISION
DEV CREATIVE ASSEMBLY
REL AVAILABLE NOW
PRICED \$29.99
PLAYERS 2-4 (2-8 LAN)
ORIG IN U.K.

GMR PILLAGE 8/10

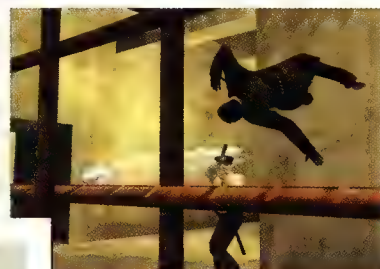
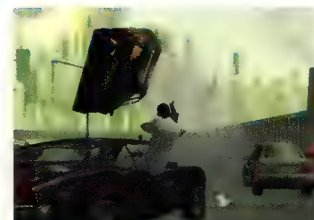
BETTER THAN: CIVILIZATION III
NOT AS GOOD AS: A GOOD HISTORY TEXTBOOK
WAIT FOR IT: ROME: TOTAL WAR

PC

YOU HAVE A CHOICE

➔ Enter *The Matrix* is available for all three consoles, as well as PC. The Xbox edition sports a glorious HDTV mode in all its glory, but there's little that's pretty to work with in the first place. As

one would expect, the PS2 and GameCube versions look pretty much the same, although (as is often the case) the Dual Shock's extra triggers make the PS2 version by far the most pleasant to play. ▶



◀ Judging from these screenshots, the game enables players to truly relive their favorite *Matrix* moments. It does, but after button-mashing their way through a 489th Focus Flip or wall kick, players will likely find themselves wishing for a little more challenge. Or variety. Or at least a compelling reason to make use of the game's vaunted hundreds of martial-arts moves.

ENTER THE MATRIX

A SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF

TEEN | PS2 [REVIEWED] | GC | PC | XB

PUBLISHER: ATARI
DEVELOPER: SHINY ENTERTAINMENT
PRICE: \$49.99
RELEASE: AVAILABLE NOW
PLAYERS: 1
ORIGIN: U.S.A.

➔ On paper, Atari's *Enter The Matrix* must have seemed bulletproof: fold the coolest aspects of a megahit movie (one inspired by anime, no less) into an accessible game in which twin narratives intertwine with not one, but two eagerly awaited sequels. Sadly, like so many games set in the world's other biggest license—*Star Wars*—the game's flaws are far from superficial. It sounds like *The Matrix*, it looks like *The Matrix*, its story even unfolds like a *Matrix* story; however, it fails to capture or convey the energy of either its source material (the movie) or the medium (videogames).

Much of this results from the necessity to adhere strictly to the trilogy—after all, *ETM* was designed to

further flesh out the onscreen action, not serve as independent narrative. Plenty of live-action and CG cut-scenes loosely connect the missions with the movies, but the pacing is awkward and the load screens frequent. Player interaction is mostly limited to running across a series of appallingly austere environments while shooting and throttling (in slow motion, of course) anything that moves.

Atari boasts over 1,000 motion-captured moves, leaving one to wonder how well the game would have fared had an equal amount of time and money been spent making them, well, necessary in any way. The crude car and hovercraft levels—certain to gall graphics junkies—are thankfully few; the hacking side game

is as exciting as it sounds.

As passive entertainment, *ETM* isn't bad. Mileage may vary, but if you're one of the many enthralled by the trilogy's already labyrinthine twists and turns, you'll love filling in the blanks—even if the getting there can drag a bit. However, as interactive entertainment (as a game, that is), this *Matrix* is quite simply spectacularly average. ▶

David Chen

GMR NOT THE ONE 4/10

SIMILAR TO: STAR WARS: SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE
WORSE THAN: MAX PAYNE
AS BAFFLING AS: THE MATRIX RELOADED

2ND OPINION

I was really hoping for nothing more than a decent-looking game with *Matrix* effects that let me beat people up. What Atari has produced is significantly less. *ETM* seems to have three simple functions: kick, move slowly, and shoot while leaning out of a car. Fun? Sorry. Not fun. ▶ James Meike

SPEED KINGS

THE POINT IS TO STAY ERECT

EVERYONE | XBOX [REVIEWED]

➔ "Speed Kings" refers to the developers' altered state of consciousness while they created this motorcycle racer. What makes this game difficult to review is the sheer number of collisions in any given race. Apparently in love with their physics engine, the creators decided to showcase what happens when two moving objects collide at high speed.

One track features the entire CPU roster ramming themselves face first into a semi, while others feature landslides, wooden barns, and parked cars that block the best line through a turn. It's possible to slide one's bike underneath a tractor trailer, only to smash it into a van parked on the far side. Granted, the computer will find a way to crash just as often as the player, and there's a perverse sense of satisfaction watching a competitor's bike shatter as it crashes head-on into an oncoming bus. The sense of speed is incredible, but it's hard

to fully appreciate it when being repeatedly broadsided by errant traffic.

The game features your-standard looking-race modes, but the most interesting element is that players who perform tricks earn a stick speed boost that makes their bike resemble a light cycle from *Tron*, and there are scores of switch rockets and tracks to unlock.

Four can play, but there's no Xbox Live support, and a title with this much road-rash begs for it. A true love-it-or-hate-it game; try before you buy. **B+**

Doug Trueman

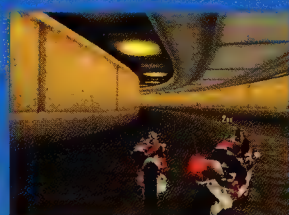
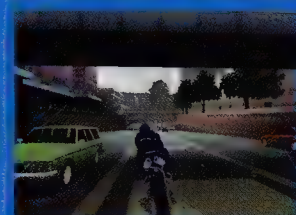
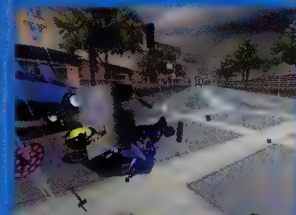
PAG ACCLAIM
 DEV CLIMAX
 R1Z JUNE 2003

PRICE \$39.99
 PLAYERS 1-4
 ORIGIN U.S.A.

GMR

FACE PLANT
 7/10

NOT AS GOOD AS: MOTO GP 2
 BETTER THAN: TEST DRIVE OFFROAD, WIDE OPEN
 ALWAYS WEAR: A HELMET



MACE GRIFFIN: BH

BOBBLEHEAD WONDER

MATURE | XBOX [REVIEWED] | GC | PS2 | PC

➔ *Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter* is the intergalactic version of Lee Marvin's *Point Blank*—some fools end up doing Mace wrong, and for the rest of the game, you cruise the galaxy cracking heads and wreaking vengeance. What you end up with is a good but lacking first-person shooter.

Combat, while not all-out awesome, is consistently interesting and solid. The enemy A.I. uses cover and backup well, but it still falls victim to your elite sniping skills. Mace's weapons feature a target lock, where the reticule eventually acquires and locks onto your target for some Z-targeted shooting. Combine the solid A.I. with the target lock and the recharging shield (thanks, *Halo*!), and you have some fun shooting high jinks.

Mace breaks up the frantic shooting by hopping into spaceships for a little space-sim time, à la *Wing Commander*. Space and ground are seamlessly combined, as Mace can just walk into a ship, grab the controls, and start flittering through space, with no load

times in between.

Unfortunately, the space flight controls are a little too sensitive, as you can easily overshoot your targets; since you can't adjust said sensitivity, you'll have a lot of just misses in space. Also, while the single-player is a lengthy and entertaining affair, that's it. Without Xbox Live (or even multiplayer) support, you're done right when Mace is done.

Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter is a perfectly competent single-player shooter with neat space-sim elements (and Henry Rollins!), but if you absolutely need multiplayer replayability, look elsewhere. **B-**

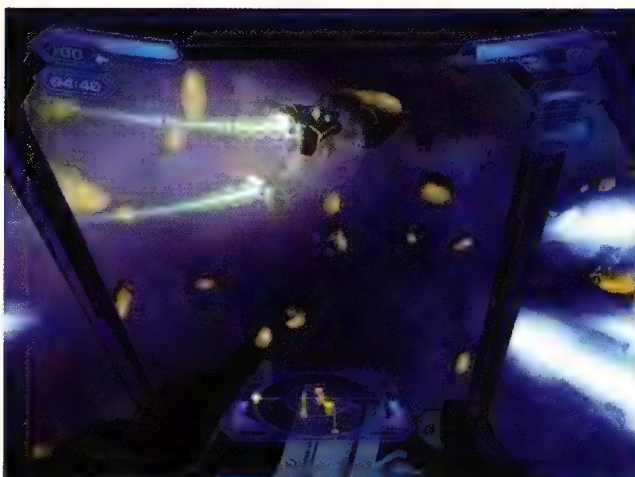
Thierry Nguyen

PAG VIVENDI UNIVERSAL
 DEV WARTHOG
 R1Z AVAILABLE NOW

PRICE \$49.99
 PLAYERS 1
 ORIGIN U.S.A.

GMR LACKING
 6/10

BETTER THAN: MEL GIBSON'S PAYBACK
 NOT AS GOOD AS: RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN
 WAIT FOR IT: UH... HALO 2?

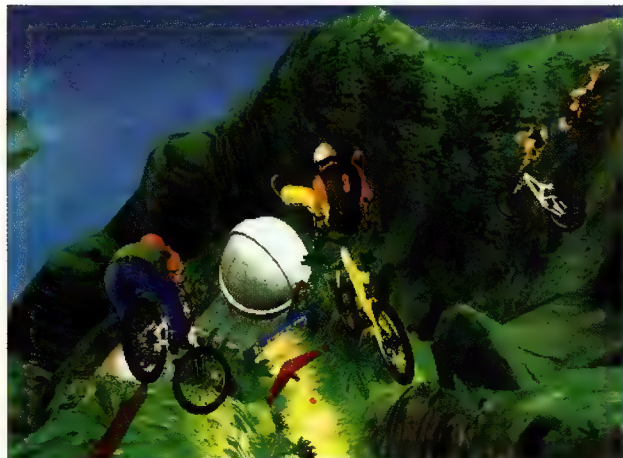


XB

PC

PS2

GC



DOWNHILL DOMINATION

FACE PLANT OBLITERATION

TEEN | PS2

➔ Taking a page out of the EA Big xtreme-sports handbook, developer Incog has created one of the fastest, most insane combat-racing games ever devised. Although it could be argued that this game picks up where the pre-Incog alumni first left off with early "xtreme" games like *Jet Moto*, *Rogue Trip*, and *Streak*, *Downhill Domination* wants more than anything to be *SSX* on dirt.

From the huge, rolling tracks, to the jaw-clenching sky-high drops into rocky chasms, to the tree/rock/animal filled landscapes, *Downhill Domination* is nothing if not visually impressive. Running at a near-constant 60fps with a full grip of riders and loads of environmental detail, the game excels at keeping your eyes glued open and your palms soaking wet.

For certain, there is no shortage of things to do. With a race tree in the Super Career mode that numbers in the dozens of races, simply completing this course of action alone will take average gamers a while to complete. Dipping your toes in any of the other myriad modes while also upgrading your bike extends that gameplay exponentially.

The problems arise when it comes to the trick mechanics. A game like this calls for controls of a *Tony Hawk* nature, which, when it comes down to it, is the best control scheme around for these games. But *Domination*'s layout is more deliberate, complex, and methodical, making pulling off more rewarding stunts unintuitive in the context of a

breakneck race, in which stunts must be executed in order to gain speed boosts. Trying to bend your bike to your will while making hairpin turns amidst shrubbery, trees, and rocks (all with dodgy collision detection) requires a level of adrenaline the human body is not capable of sustaining. Make sure to have some Red Bull and Visine handy. You'll need it.

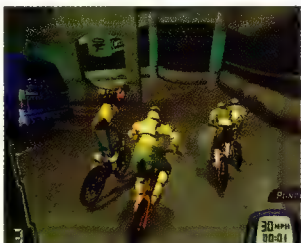
If the tracks were a little bit less ambitious or the trick system streamlined for human hands, *Downhill Domination* would easily be one of the best games of its type, up there with *SSX Tricky* and *Tony Hawk*. As it stands, it's merely almost there. **C**

—James Mielke

PUB: SCEA PRICE: \$39.99
REV: INCOG STUDIOS RELEASERS: 1-4
REL: JULY 2002 GEN: PS2 ORIGIN: U.S.A.

GMR FACE-BREAKER
7/10

BETTER THAN: BMX XXX
NOT AS GOOD AS: WAKEBOARDING UNLEASHED
WAIT FOR IT: TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND



MIDTOWN MADNESS 3

WE'LL ALWAYS HAVE PARIS

EVERYONE | XBOX

➔ In our preview last month, you might have noticed that we were feeling pretty down on *Midtown Madness 3*. Collision-detection problems abound and graphically, the game looked flat-out terrible. What a difference a month makes, apparently, as the final game turns out to be a competent checkpoint racer that's pleasing to both the eye and mind.

Like previous games in the series, *Midtown Madness 3* focuses on two cities. This time out, we travel to two capitals that have been at political odds recently: Washington, D.C., and Paris. Odd how that worked out, no? But while there are only two of them, both towns are quite large and well crafted. While vacationing in fabulous D.C. or Paris, you'll be racing in various undercover missions (which are basically repackaged checkpoint races) that force you to use a specific vehicle, usually a slow and bulky one that's not much fun to drive. The story is irrelevant and the characters are more or less forgettable stereotypes—an Italian mobster named Michael Tortellini...brilliant! Completing the missions unlocks new, and obviously

better, vehicles. After everything's opened up, though, it's hard to imagine ever going back to the missions. Hence the need for replayability in the multiplayer modes. Racing against friends (or sworn enemies, whatever) online is always better than driving alone, but in *Madness*, it comes at a price: All traffic and pedestrians are removed from the game. Fortunately, the capture the flag and tag style modes are plenty entertaining, especially with a larger group.

As long as you're not looking for any great variety or particular innovation, *Midtown Madness 3* is a solid buy and yet another reason to play online. **B+**

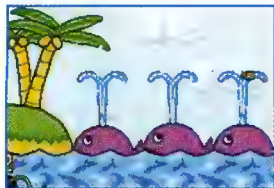
—Andrew Pfister

PUB: MICROSOFT PRICE: \$49.99
REV: DIGITAL ILLUSIONS RELEASERS: 1-8
REL: AVAILABLE NOW GEN: XBOX ORIGIN: EUROPE

GMR SOLID
7/10

BETTER THAN: WRECKLESS
NOT AS GOOD AS: BURNOUT 2
ON PAR WITH: MIDNIGHT CLUB II





GBA REVIEW

WONDERING WHAT TO STICK IN YOUR TRAVEL BAG THIS MONTH? LOOK NO FURTHER THAN OUR GBA SECTION

WARIO WARE, INC. MUST. PLAY. ONE. MORE. GAME...

EVERYONE | GBA

➔ Picking your nose. Making a Border collie break into tears. Beating Mother Brain. Catching a piece of toast. Sinking a 15-foot putt. Jumping over a potato on wheels. This is *Wario Ware*, a collection of over 200 totally unexpected, random, frighteningly creative "microgames."

Events range from playing segments of classic NES games to avoiding oncoming traffic to finishing miniature space-shooter levels. There's even a full version of *Dr. Mario...er*, excuse us, *Dr. Wario* as an unlockable bonus. It's as if the game designers carried notebooks around, jotted down descriptions of objects they saw or events that occurred in everyday life, and then made a game out of them. While on drugs.

At the beginning of each game, you're given a single-word command ("Shoot!" "Land!" "Dodge!" etc.), and you have approximately three seconds to figure out what you have to do, and how you have to do it. Mess up four times, and it's game over. After a few games, *Wario Ware* starts to go rapid-fire, leaving you less time to figure out what the heck is going on. What results is the most bizarre, frantic, addictive, and just-plain-entertaining gameplay we've seen in a long time. Each character has its own distinct set of games, including a boss level you have to complete before moving on to the next stage. Running through the levels multiple times increases the difficulty of each game, making them slightly different from the last time you played—there might be more enemies to shoot or the stick you have to grab might be smaller.

Wario Ware is so different, so playable, and just so good, it belongs in every GBA owner's library. Whatever got into the water supply over at Nintendo HQ, please, take another sip. **IC**

—Andrew Pfister

PUB: NINTENDO	PRICE: \$29.99
DEV: NINTENDO	PLAYERS: 1
REL: AVAILABLE NOW	ORIGIN: JAPAN

GMR MINI MANY.
9/10

BETTER THAN: MARIO PARTY 2 (N64)
ALSO TRY: INCREDIBLE CRISIS
DON'T FORGET: TO STOP AND BREATHE.



DONKEY KONG COUNTRY NINTENDO FLINGS SOME POOP

EVERYONE | GBA

➔ It's funny how time works. Released in 1994, *Donkey Kong Country* for Super Nintendo was hailed as a masterpiece and a technological marvel, receiving the highest praise from critics and gamers alike. Nine years later, port-happy Nintendo apparently thought it might be a good idea to bring Donkey and Diddy to GBA in the hope that the people who lauded the original would say the same things about this version. Sorry, but the only thing we can say is that, in retrospect, *Donkey Kong Country* was a good game, but greatly overrated.

This GBA game is one of the strangest ports we've seen. Nintendo has replaced the overworld maps with new artwork, added new minigames for Candy and Funky Kong (rhythm dancing and fishing, respectively), placed collectible camera icons all over the place, and tweaked some of the boss fights to, ostensibly, make them more challenging. With the possible exception of the Time Attack mode, none of these new features actually makes the game better—they just make it different. Boss fights are still pathetically easy (jump over attack, then jump on head of generic goopy eyed mammal), and the same annoying control quirks are still present.

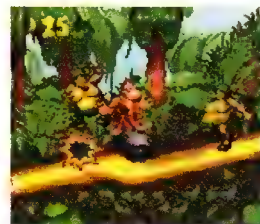
It also doesn't hold up graphically to the original. Although it's one of the better-looking GBA games, the lush environments and shiny character models are far less detailed. Animation, lighting, and water effects still look good, but if the GBA is supposedly more powerful than the SNES, *Donkey Kong Country* certainly doesn't prove it. **IC**

—Andrew Pfister

PUB: NINTENDO	PRICE: \$29.99
DEV: NINTENDO/BAE	PLAYERS: 1-2
REL: AVAILABLE NOW	ORIGIN: U.K.

GMR BABOON
6/10

BETTER THAN: WARIO LAND 4
NOT AS GOOD AS: LEGEND OF STARFISH
JUST IN TIME FOR: DONKEY KONG+



DRAGON BALL Z: LOG II KAMEHAMEHA!

EVERYONE | GBA

Combining the best of *Final Fantasy* with *Final Fight*, *The Legacy of Goku II* is a fighting RPG with more fireballs than a battle between Ken and Ryu. The story begins with Gohan realizing that the evil Frieza is still alive, so he rounds up the heroes of the *Dragon Ball Z* series for combat. Players can choose among Gohan, Trunks, Vegeta, Piccolo, and Goku as they journey through a massive world that explores almost a third of the *Dragon Ball Z* mythology.

The game plays out in real-time, so players who are looking for an RPG instead of an action title might be disappointed. Every character has multiple techniques, and they must learn and improve these through training. In addition, they have special attacks that use their inner focus. Quests range from collecting various items (dragon balls, golden capsules)

to helping down-and-out locals. Traditional RPG progress hasn't evolved: kill creatures to level up, find key cards to open doors, use beans to heal while exploring.

Fortunately, the problems that plagued the first title have been fixed: Characters can now walk diagonally (thank the heavens), collision detection is solid, the character animations have been tweaked, and sprites that indicate a speaking character are now huge and clear instead of tiny and muddled.

Although not for everyone, the game will appeal to fans of the series and those waiting for a more mature RPG to arrive. Gamers who were put off by Atari's first effort should give it another chance, because *Legacy of Goku II* is better than the original in almost every respect. **LE**

Doug Trueman



→ This is a pleasantly surprising improvement to its lackluster predecessor. Of course, *DBZ* fans probably don't care one way or another.

PUB: ATARI
DEV: WEBFOOT TECHNOLOGIES
REL: AVAILABLE NOW
PRICE: \$29.99
PLAYERS: 1
ORIGIN: U.S.A.

GMR LIZARDLY 7/10

MUCH BETTER THAN: THE LEGACY OF GOKU
NOT AS GOOD AS: GOLDEN SUN: THE LOST AGE
WAIT FOR IT: FINAL FANTASY: TACTICS ADVANCE



SONIC PINBALL PARTY NOW WITH BIGGER BALLS

EVERYONE | GBA

Pinball fans are some of the most hardcore, and they've good reason to be. Pinball requires twitch reflexes, patience, strategy, and a heavy hand to coach the ball on its proper path.

With tables based on *Sonic the Hedgehog*, *NIGHTS*, and *Samba de Amigo*, Sega's latest GBA title should be called *Sega Smash Pinball Pack*. Each table features graphics, music, and sound effects from the original titles, as well as adapted gameplay. For example, to score big on the *NIGHTS* table, players must shoot their ball through the Ideya Palace, collect four Ideya Captures, and then defeat Nightmaren. But there's far more to each table—enough to keep pinheads happily rolling.

The physics engine is dead on: Balls handle as they would on a real table, even occasionally getting stuck in spots and requiring a shoulder-button nudge to get them moving again. A tiny amount of slowdown

appears during multiball play, but the table becomes so chaotic that it's almost a relief.

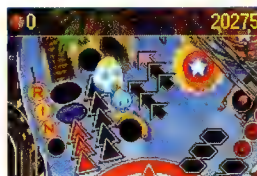
Sonic Pinball Party features the following modes: Four-Player From One Cartridge, Arcade, Tutorial, and Story. The Story mode pits the hedgehog against pinball rivals from his past (read: Eggman). Rings collected on the *Sonic* table can be gambled in a casino and used to raise tiny Chao, a welcome throwback from *Sonic Adventure*. Even if you just want to jam on the flippers, you can't go wrong here. **LE**

Doug Trueman

PUB: SEGA
DEV: SONIC TEAM
REL: AVAILABLE NOW
PRICE: \$29.99
PLAYERS: 1
ORIGIN: JAPAN

GMR RICOCHET 8/10

BETTER THAN: PINBALL OF THE DEAD
NOT AS GOOD AS: POKEMON PINBALL
WAIT FOR IT: POKEMON PINBALL: RUBY AND SAPH.



→ Sonic Team fans will dig the *NIGHTS* board, which is conveniently not pictured here. Guess you gotta play the game!



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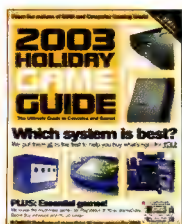
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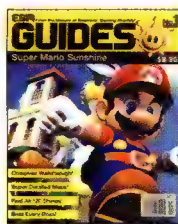
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THIS MONTH IN MORE

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→ 1, 2, 3, *Teamwork!*

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→ The re-education of Will Ferrell, Adam Sandler gets all serious, and *Bebop* goes big screen

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→ Got \$15,000 burning a hole in your pocket?

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→ Telly-phones are fer talkin' on, you damn fools!



BRUTE FORCE

YOU KNOW, ONE TO BE RECKONED WITH AND ALL

➔ In the world of *Brute Force*, there is often more than one solution to a problem. Granted, running around with guns and killing everything that moves usually works very well, but it's not the size of your gun that matters. It's how you use it. And you wouldn't want to shoot blanks, would you?

MEET THE TEAM...

➔ What the members of *Brute Force* lack in personality, they make up for in...well, pure brute force. The game is based on teamwork, meaning you'll have to keep tabs on who can do what and when they should do it....



TEX

A fan of anything automatic, Tex is the go-to guy if you need to spray and pray. He has one of the longest life bars and takes little damage. Tex can equip virtually every gun, though he shies away from pistols. Up close and personal, nothing beats the shotgun, but for mowing down the unwashed hordes, keep a machine gun equipped.

SPECIAL ABILITY-BERZERKER

Tex's special move lets him fire two weapons at the same time for 45 seconds at a time. He can arm two of any weapon for symmetrical carnage, or he can combine alien technologies for both long- and short-range fighting. When one gun runs out of ammunition, Tex will automatically shoulder it and return to the one that still has ammo, so keep this in mind before entering a fray. His meter recharges quickly, but it's a good idea to disengage his special ability when he's not in battle. He'll gain strength as he fights, and you can usually carry two weapons.



FLINT

The sexy synth doesn't take damage from minor environmental hazards, but that doesn't mean she can swim through lava. A pair of bionic eyes lets her see farther than any of the other squad members when using a sniper rifle, so be sure to aim at your foe's head for a one-hit kill. Be careful when using her special ability, since it reduces her speed by almost half.

SPECIAL ABILITY- ADVANCED TARGETING

This works best when she's using a sniper rifle or when she's surrounded, but the enemies are aiming elsewhere. Her targeting can also be quickly activated and then deactivated, to locate hiding enemies who can then be taken out with a manual head shot. Though this ability might look useful on paper, Flint's special is automatically deactivated whenever she takes damage, so it's really no big whoop. ➔

XB



BRUTUS

Brutus can carry only one heavy machine gun, and he always packs a rifle. Like Tex, he can dish out substantial damage, but he takes slightly more because of his healing ability. His default weapon, the Feral Cutter, lacks power and has a low firing rate. It should be disposed of and replaced immediately.

SPECIAL ABILITY—SPIRIT OF VENGAR

This has multiple useful functions. Pressing White enables a thermal view, which lets Brutus easily find foes obscured by terrain. It also reduces the damage he takes from enemy fire, and lets him charge any opponent for an instant kill. Be advised: Rushing an opponent with the Spirit of Vengar will immediately deplete his Stamina meter. Although it's possible to kill multiple enemies with just a small amount of stamina, it prevents him from using the best of his special abilities: health regeneration.



HAWK

Hawk is unable to carry heavy weaponry and can carry only some armor. Since her Life bar is small, she's the last person you want in a firefight. A shot to the head from her will kill most enemies outright, making it a good idea to use her to weaken forces before engaging. If you see incoming weapon fire while zoomed in on a target, start evading immediately.

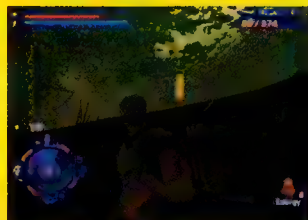
SPECIAL ABILITY—INVISIBILITY

Hawk's special move allows her to effortlessly sweep through enemy patrols and slice sentries to pieces with her lightsab—...um, Powerblade. One slash is almost always instantly fatal and can be used to replace gunfire when low on ammunition. But Hawk's ability isn't limited to melee fighting; it's also great for obtaining difficult target locks on enemies with a sniper rifle. Unfortunately, her Stamina bar recharges very slowly, so use invisibility with discretion.

SURVIVAL TACTICS

➔ Commanding the *Brute Force* team isn't the most difficult of tasks, but at certain points in the game, a little strategy can go a long way. Playing to the strengths and weaknesses of each member will help you put away more bank at the end of the mission. And that's what it's really all about, isn't it?

PULL THE PIN AND THROW IT BACK



➔ A well-timed grenade can alter the course of the battle, but be aware of two potentially lethal developments. First, your character will stop dead in their tracks while actually throwing the grenade, leaving you vulnerable to enemy fire. Once you've pressed the grenade button, the meter will quickly charge to full capacity, so you'd better be ready to head for the hills. The second aspect is that the grenades have a very long detonation fuse and never explode on impact. Make sure you don't rush into an armed grenade while it's on the ground.

On the positive side, enemies don't recognize the inherent threat in most of the grenades you throw. If you can toss a pineapple over a ridge, it's very likely that the group on the receiving end will merely observe the explosive and not take any defensive action.

NEED A LITTLE HELP HERE

➔ While most of the time your team will comment on what's actually happening, several of these comments are scripted to occur at specific events. If Tex suddenly calls out that he needs a medic, chances are good

that he still has half of his Life bar left. Likewise, the rest of the squad will sometimes call for assistance when they don't actually need it. Be aware that things are not always as they seem.

THE WHITES OF THEIR EYES



➔ When *Brute Force* lands on Osiris to rescue the imprisoned spy, be very careful about how you spend your ammunition. Because the Seers don't use traditional sidearms, you will have only the rounds that are beamed into huts. Save your ammo; instead, equip Hawk's Powerblade and turn invisible. Sneak up from behind and slice some throats, or equip one of the few regenerating guns.

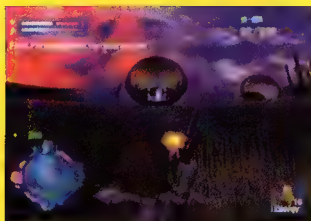
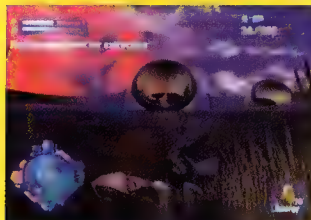
THE SWITCHEROO



➔ Because of various strength, skill, and weight limitations, not every character in *Brute Force* can hold every weapon—certain laws of physics must be abided by. When you find a weapon you want to obtain, be advised that your character might not switch out the weapon they're currently holding, but will instead switch out the one on their back. This can lead to confusion and weapon configurations you weren't quite expecting.

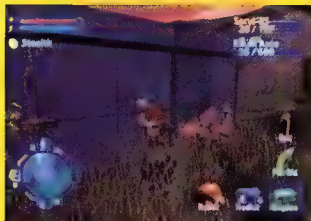


DEAD OR ALIVE?



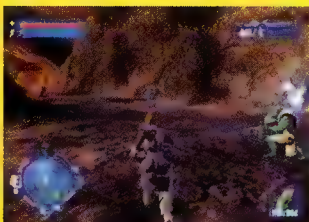
➔ If you're in a sniper battle and you're not sure if your counterpart is dead, keep an eye on the left side of the screen for the Bonus Score indicator. If you suddenly find yourself with some extra cash, give yourself a pat yourself on the back, reload, and keep moving.

LEAVE 'EM BEHIND



➔ If you need to carry out a specific task (like sniping mines or taking out a mounted gun), order the rest of your team to stop at a specific location. There's no point in racing forward in Stealth mode if there's a lumbering dinosaur 20 feet behind you.

WHO'S THE BOSS



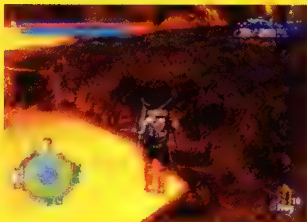
➔ Ordering your party around can be somewhat confusing, especially for beginners and people who aren't used to leadership positions. The

easiest way to instruct the group is to press the digital pad in the direction of the character you're already using and then release it (tapping the controller will switch characters). The game will freeze and the menu will appear. Select the characters you want to perform an action by pressing the appropriate direction on the pad, and then press the corresponding Face button to dole out the orders. Your squad will swing into motion and you'll return to the character you started with.

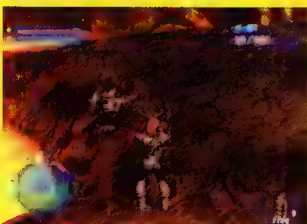
FOLLOW THE LEADER

➔ While your team will essentially stay a few steps behind you, this doesn't necessarily mean it has the same abilities when negotiating terrain. Be careful when crossing lava fields, and don't get reckless. Though Tex might be able to jump over a flaming pit of death, it's entirely possible that the rest of the team will fall short and die instantly. Look before you leap.

Here, Tex the showboater takes a jump that Flint fails to make.



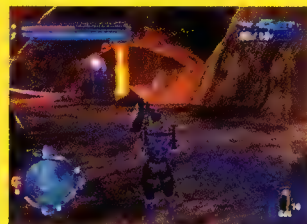
Tex kneels and says a few kind words about his newly departed cyborg friend before moving on and continuing the mission. Guy's gotta get paid, after all. Note her charred memory chip floating about the lava. Such a tragic loss—you hate to see them go so young.



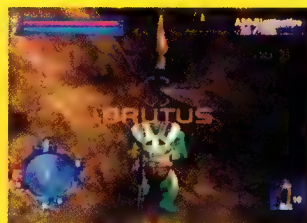
BEWARE THE HAND OF GOD

➔ Every now and again, you'll commit some kind of act—be it throwing your controller, swearing at the screen, or cursing game developers—that earns you an instant trip to hell. Just grit your teeth and bear it. It builds character.

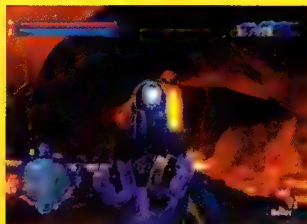
For example, here is Tex, standing and enjoying the view. "I should move here," he's thinking. "No creatures, no enemy fire—just waves of heat."



Brutus then takes over command and orders Brute Force to scout ahead.



He comes across an interesting structure and decides to head back to the squad to tell them about it.



Brutus returns to find Tex, very alive and very well only moments ago, now a crumpled corpse in a heap. "Oh well," shrugs Brutus. "Never liked the guy anyway." **IC**



A.I.

HIS CODES ARE REAL. BUT HE IS NOT



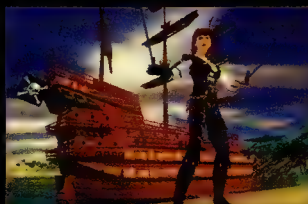
01 NBA STREET VOL. 2 GC, PS2, XBOX

➔ One of the best basketball games ever just got better, thanks to our codes. Be sure to enter these while your friend is out of the room so he doesn't catch you cheating.

Select a pickup game and choose to be either home or away. Choose and accept an ID. Then enter one of the following codes when "Enter codes now" appears on the screen. On **GameCube** and **Xbox**, hold L while entering the codes. On **PS2**, hold L1.

PS2	Xbox	PlayStation 2	GameCube
Unlimited turbo	X, X, Y, Y	Square, Square, Triangle, Triangle	B, B, Y, Y
Big heads	B, X, X, B	Circle, Square, Square, Circle	X, B, B, X
Small players	Y, Y, B, X	Triangle, Triangle, Circle, Square	Y, Y, X, B
ABA ball	B, X, B, X	Circle, Square, Circle, Square	X, B, X, B
WNBA ball	B, Y, Y, B	Circle, Triangle, Triangle, Circle	X, Y, Y, X
Ball trails	Y, Y, Y, X	Triangle, Triangle, Triangle, Square	Y, Y, Y, B
No display bars	X, B, B, B	Square, Circle, Circle, Circle	B, X, X, X
All jerseys	B, Y, X, X	Square, Triangle, Circle, Circle	B, Y, X, X
All courts	X, Y, Y, X	Square, Triangle, Triangle, Square	B, Y, Y, B
St. Lunatics/All Legends	X, Y, B, Y	Square, Triangle, Circle, Triangle	X, Y, B, Y
All NBA legends	B, Y, Y, X	Square, Triangle, Triangle, Circle	X, Y, Y, B
Classic Michael Jordan	X, Y, X, X	Square, Triangle, Square, Square	X, Y, X, X
Explosive rims	B, B, B, Y	Circle, Circle, Circle, Triangle	X, X, X, Y
No counters	Y, Y, B, B	Triangle, Triangle, Circle, Circle	Y, Y, X, X
All quicks	Y, B, Y, X	Triangle, Circle, Triangle, Square	Y, X, Y, B
Easy two pointers	Y, B, X, Y	Triangle, Circle, Square, Triangle	Y, X, B, Y
Difficult two pointers	Y, X, B, Y	Triangle, Square, Circle, Triangle	Y, B, X, Y

02 PIRATES: THE LEGEND OF BLACK KAT PS2, XB



➔ **GMR** went sailing and returned with da booty: Use these codes to become the scurviest knave on yer block. Arr, matey! Arrrrrr!

PS2

Hold R1 and R2 while entering the codes.

Invincibility for Katarina

X, Circle, L3, Triangle, R3, Select, R3, L1, L2, Square

Reveal all treasure chests

R3, X, Triangle, L3, Circle, L1, Select, L3, Square, L2

All treasure chest keys

Circle, Select, X, Square, R3, L1, L3, L2, Triangle, L3

Unlimited items

Triangle, L1, Select, L2, R3, L3, Square, X, R3, Circle

Extra gold

Triangle, R3, L3, X, Square, R3, Select, L1, Circle

Unlimited wind boost

Select, L1, R3, Circle, L2, Triangle, X, L3

Xbox

Note that CL and CR stand for click left analog stick and click right analog stick, respectively. Hold both triggers, then press:

Invincibility for Katarina

A, Y, CL, B, CR, Back, CR, White, Black, X

Reveal all treasure chests

CR, A, B, CL, Y, White, Back, CL, X, Black

All treasure chest keys

Y, Back, A, X, CR, White, CL, Black, B, CL

Unlimited items

B, White, Back, Black, CR, CL, X, A, CR, Y

Extra gold

B, CR, White, X, A, CR, Back, CL, Y, Black

Unlimited wind boost

Back, White, CR, X, CL, Y, Black, B, A, CL

03 MOTO GP2 XBOX



➔ If your wrists are tired from gripping your handlebars and you need a break, play some of *Moto GP 2*'s unlockable minigames. Go to the Options menu and watch the text credits (not the video credits). Scroll down until you find the text for the minigames, then press A. If you've done it correctly, the letter A in the word Games will change to resemble the A button on the Xbox controller.

04 ENTER THE MATRIX GC, PC, PS2, XBOX



➔ Atari's videogame version of the Wachowski brothers' movie is based on a system, and systems are based on rules. Some can be bent. Others can be broken.

Open the Hacking menu, choose your saved game, and enter the system. Type Login and Guest to get the ball rolling. Then type Cheat and enter the following codes.

All weapons unlocked

0034AFFF

Infinite ammo

1DDF2556

Infinite focus

69E5D9E4

Infinite health

7F4DF451

Bonus level

13D2C77F

Invisibility

FFFFFFF1

Multiplayer mode

D5C55D1E

Faster logos flight speed

7867F443

05 RISE OF NATIONS PC



➔ Problems with diplomacy? Can't get a country to bend to your imperialist will? Is your iron fist weakening? Hit Enter during gameplay and then input these codes to dominate the world. Use the settings in brackets to choose your victim or effect.

Set all players to human and full map

Cheat sandbox

Set A.I. state

Cheat ai [on, off, or debug]

Force alliance with nation

Cheat ally [name]

Force peace with nation

Cheat peace [name]

Force war with nation

Cheat war [name]

Turn off computer control

Cheat human [name]

Turn on computer control

Cheat computer [name]

Defeat nation

Cheat defeat [name]

Victory for nation

Cheat victory [name]

Show or change technology

Cheat tech [name] [tech or all]

[on or off]

1,000 more units of all resources

Cheat resource all+1000

Change age for nation

Cheat age [number][name]

Change military level for nation

Cheat military [number] [name]

Change civic level for nation

Cheat civic [number][name]

Change commerce level for nation

Cheat commerce [number] [name]

Change science level for nation

Cheat science [number] [name]

Change all library technology levels for nation

Cheat library [number] [name]

Kill object or all selected

Cheat die [name or no entry]

Finishes selected building(s) or next item in queue

Cheat finish

Pointer drops an atomic bomb

Cheat nuke

Toggle full map

Cheat reveal [on or off]

06 STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS XBOX



➔ We ran a few codes for the PlayStation 2 and GameCube versions back in our second issue. After being told to sit and spin on a lightsaber by Xbox owners, we found some previously cloaked codes. Enter these at the Code screen.

Unlimited ammunition

NOHONOR

All multiplayer levels

LETSADANCE

Three bonus objectives for current mission marked complete

ALITTLEHELP

All bonus materials

IGIVEUP

Team photos

YOURMASTERS

All FMV sequences

GOTPOPCORN

07 BLACK AND BRUISED GC



➔ We've run codes in the past for this pantheon of pathologically pissed pugilists, but a slight concussion caused us to forget the name-activated cheats.

Unlock all boxers

Mike Tyson

Unlock all arenas

Lennox Lewis

Invincibility

Muhammad Ali

Fat mode

Rich Oberdick

Punch drunk artificial intelligence

Ajessica Melton

Big head mode

David Tua

08 ATV QUAD POWER RACING 2 PS2



➔ Enter these as your profile name. If you want all the help you can get, punch in the first code. If you'd rather ease into your cheating slowly, use the other codes.

Unlock all riders, ATVs, tracks, and bonuses

GOLD DUST

All riders

BUBBA

All ATVs

GENERALLEE

All tracks

ROADKILL

All tricks

FIDDLERSELBOW

Maximum stats

GINGHAM

Challenges

DOUBLEBARREL

09 UFC TAPOUT 2 XBOX



➔ Here's how to find hidden fighters.

Big John McCarthy

Unlock all the regular fighters and then win all silver belts in Championship mode with all of them.

Bruce Buffer

Win 33 consecutive matches in Arcade mode.

Mask

Enter Arcade mode. When the best record appears, press Right, Left, Right, Left, X, Y.

Additional Fighters

Enter Arcade mode. Win five fights in a row to unlock a fighter. Win another five to unlock another fighter. And so on.

10 DEF JAM: VENDETTA PS2



➔ Last month we ran enough hidden-character codes to start your own Battle Royal. Here are the rest of them.

When you get to the Character Selection screen, enter these codes.

PlayStation 2

Hold all four shoulder buttons, then for the character you want, press:

Moses

Triangle, Triangle, Square, Square, X

N.O.R.E.

Circle, Square, Triangle, X, Circle

Nyne

Square, Circle, X, X, Triangle

Omar

Circle, Circle, Square, Triangle, Triangle

Opal

Circle, Circle, Square, Square, Triangle

Peewee

X, X, Square, Triangle, Square

Penny

X, X, X, Triangle, Circle

Pockets

Triangle, Square, Circle, Square, X

Proof (alternate costume)

X, Square, Triangle, Square, Circle

Razor

Triangle, Square, Triangle, Circle, X

Razor (alternate costume)

Square, Circle, X, Triangle, Triangle

Redman

Circle, Circle, Triangle, Square, X

Ruffneck

X, Square, X, Triangle, Circle

Scarface

Circle, Square, X, Triangle, Square

Sketch

Triangle, Triangle, Circle, Square, X

Snowman

Triangle, Triangle, X, X, Circle

Spider (alternate costume)

Square, Triangle, X, Square, Circle

Steel

X, Triangle, Circle, Circle, Triangle

T'ai

Circle, Circle, Square, X, Circle

Tank (alternate costume)

X, Triangle, Triangle, Circle, Circle

Zaheer

Triangle, Triangle, Square, X, X

XB

PC

PS2

GBA

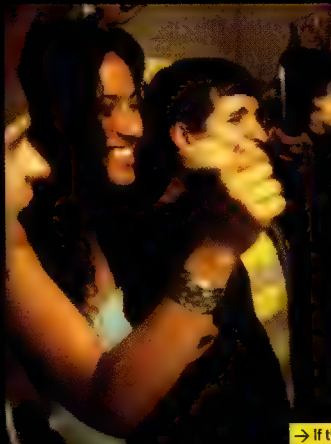
GC

NEW

A PRIMER ON HIGHER EDUCATION. ANYONE CAN FALL IN LOVE. AND SPACE COWBOYS



→ They definitely look like frat boys.



→ If this man never wins an Academy Award, there truly is no justice in this world.



OLD SCHOOL

ALL WE ARE IS DUST IN THE WIND

RATED R | 90 MINUTES | 1 DISC | DIRECTED BY TODD PHILLIPS

➔ Ask anybody to name a frat-house movie and they'll say *Animal House*, right? Creating another frat-house movie would seem to be an exercise in futility, but *Animal House* was released 25 years ago and, well, things have changed.

Mitch (Luke Wilson) returns home to find his girlfriend expanding her sexual horizons; meanwhile, Frank (Will Ferrell) seems set to put his wild years behind him by getting married—against the advice of Beanie (Vince Vaughn).

Mitch's world has come

crashing down, but his friends are there to help. Their response is to do what any three thirty-something guys with disposable income would do: They open a fraternity house at the local university. Activities include drunken parties (one featuring Snoop Dogg himself) and a KY Jelly wrestling tournament. At the fraternity's inaugural meeting, Beanie promises that the group will "give nothing back to the academic community, as well as provide no public service of any kind."

Thus, the stage is set for a fresh

take on various themes, including freedom from responsibility and an inevitable confrontation with college authorities.

Wilson, Ferrell, and Vaughn work so well together that there's never a dull moment onscreen. Director Todd Phillips skillfully avoids the most obvious comedy clichés and delivers some of the funniest and freshest—if hardly highbrow—set pieces in a long time.

Special features: No details on the DVD's special features were available at press time.



→ Adam Sandler, dramatic tour de force

PUNCH DRUNK LOVE

PROOF'S IN THE PUDDING

2 DISCS | DIRECTED BY PAUL THOMAS ANDERSON

→ Inspired by the true story of a California man who purchased more than 12,000 cups of pudding for \$3,000 and accumulated 1.25 million frequent-flier miles, Paul Thomas Anderson's *Punch-Drunk Love* is a quirky romance story— weird, even.

The cast is small and features many Anderson (*Boogie Nights*, *Magnolia*) regulars, but the focus is on Barry (Adam Sandler) and Lena (Emily Watson).

Sandler has his critics, and some of the criticism leveled at him is, let's be fair, pretty well

deserved. This movie gives him a chance to explore some aspects of acting that he's previously avoided, and he embraces the challenge.

A couple of years ago, you would have been laughed at for using the words "Adam Sandler" and "Oscar" in the same sentence. But with this moving performance, that's not such a silly idea.

Special features: Along with the usual deleted scenes, trailers, and outtakes are two features on the work of the film's art director, Jeremy Blake.

COWBOY BEBOP

SEE YOU, SPACE COWBOY



→ The Bebop crew, not particularly amused



→ In the future, every major city is clean and sparkly



There is no cooler animated series than *Cowboy Bebop*. Period.

Bebop is the spaceship in which galactic bounty hunters Spike, Fay, and Jet travel, along with companions Ed and Ein the dog.

It is 2071 and the \$300 million bounty on the head of a bio-terrorist is welcome music to the ears of the Bebop crew. The clues point to Vincent, who announced his arrival with a huge explosion on a Mars freeway and seems to have a far more sinister agenda.

This eagerly anticipated trip to the big screen boasts the same director, writer, and voice cast as the series and could have simply played like an extended episode. However, it manages to stand on its own two feet.

Many factors make this movie enjoyable: The oddball characters have more depth and style than many of their real-world counterparts. The animation is sometimes explosive and sometimes subtle, but always pitch perfect. And the hip soundtrack plays such an important role, it's like a character in itself.

While watching in Japanese with English subtitles seems more appropriate, the DVD's English dub is far less awkward than what you'd find on many other anime works.

Whether you're a die-hard fan or simply wondering what all the fuss is about, *Cowboy Bebop* won't disappoint.

Special features: The excellent package includes trailers, making-of and behind-the-scenes features, music videos, art galleries, storyboard comparisons, and in-depth character profiles. **B+**

COWBOY BEBOP: THE MOVIE □ SAMUEL GOLDWYN FILMS □ DIRECTED BY SHINICHIRO WATANABE □ RUNTIME 116 MINUTES

XB

PC

PS2

GBA

GC

RETRO ACTIVE

OLDER GAMES NEED PLAYIN'. TOO. GMR PROVIDES A GOOD LITTLE GUIDE TO GOOD LITTLE STUFF

THE NINTENDO 64 SILICON'S LAST STAND

SEPTEMBER 1996

➔ You can sum up N64 with one word: cartridges. By foregoing the cheaper, more expansive CD-ROM format for expensive carts, Nintendo kept away third parties and any hope of a well-rounded N64 software library. That the console race remained close at all (as it did for the first year) was due solely to the brilliance of *Super Mario 64*, which is to N64 what *Halo* is to Xbox. Unfortunately, with month-long gaps between titles, a dearth of software bearing Nintendo gems left the console trailing well behind PlayStation. Four built-in controller ports kept it a multiplayer favorite, though.

Because of awful third-party support, Nintendo was left to provide all of N64's thrills. And it came up rather big: *Super Mario 64*, *GoldenEye*, and *Zelda: Ocarina of Time* are considered to be some of the best games ever, let alone of the era. Throw in *Zelda* semisequel *Majora's Mask* (cruelly underappreciated), future Xbox port *Conker's BFD*, *StarFox 64*, *Mario Kart 64*, *Blast Corps*, *1080° Snowboarding*, *F-Zero X*, *Wave Race 64*, and the *Mario Golf*, *Mario Tennis*, and *Mario Party* games and you have an awesome lineup. Pity that the gaps between them were filled with the likes of *Superman 64*. ☛

_Ravi Hiranand



NOW... A handful of classic games does not a worldwide success make. Look at an N64 game now and you'll probably cry.

EASY TO FIND

GMR 6¹⁰ BLURRY

THEN... While the cartridge format perplexed everyone, the incredible first-party games made up for it. For a while.

GMR 8¹⁰ CLEAR



THE PLAYSTATION THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING

SEPTEMBER 1995

➔ The ultimate irony behind Sony's current success is that it's all Nintendo's fault. By tossing aside Sony's plans for an SNES CD-ROM peripheral, Nintendo insulted the company and ignited the fires of competition inside the electronics giant. Nintendo's snub propelled Sony to create the PlayStation, the most popular home console in history (that's 96 million sold and counting!). And you can see why from the hardware: It's powerful, uses cheap CD media, and is easy to program. The PlayStation introduced memory cards and a controller good enough for Sony to use (with tweaks) with PS2. Indeed, the success of PS1 (before and after the supercute redesign form) is the reason PS2 rules with such an iron fist.

It's hard to pick out key titles in a system library littered with them.

PlayStation's ratio of fun to shovelware is particularly high, and the sheer volume of titles means the system has many, many great games—most of which you probably already own, like *Metal Gear Solid*, which has all the Solid Snake goodness with none of the Raiden weirdness, and *Gran Turismo*, a revelation upon release with supertight controls, realistic physics, anal attention to detail, and “those” replays. There's also the glory of *Resident Evil*, released well before everyone jumped on the survival-horror bandwagon. We shouldn't forget the sumptuous *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*, either. Or the delightfully offbeat *PaRappa the Rapper*. There are far too many good games to recommend, and we haven't even mentioned *Final Fantasy VII*, *VIII* and *IX*. ☛

_Ravi Hiranand

NOW... With an unbeatable library of... games, there's no reason not to have a PlayStation, especially in its sexy, redesigned form.

EASY TO FIND

GMR 8¹⁰ IRON MAN

THEN... Did that “3D thing” better than the Sega Saturn, and in the process became the best-selling console of all time. And it ain't dead yet.

GMR 9¹⁰ THREE DIMENSIONAL

ROAD TRIP

YOU NEED THIS GAME. NO. SERIOUSLY

OCTOBER 2002 FOR PLAYSTATION 2

➔ If you're one of the many who overlooked a little budget title released late last year by the name of *Road Trip*, you're not alone. The game is in actuality part of the *Choro Q* series (*Choro Q HG 2*, to be precise), which was last seen in the United States as *Conspiracy's Gadgets Racers*. While the *Choro Q* brand maintains a low—but growing—profile in the United States (thanks to the *DigiQ* series of remote-controlled cars) the equally obscure *Road Trip* packaging so thoroughly

buries the *Choro Q*-ness, you'd never know what kind of gem lurks within.

Much more than a simple racing game, *Road Trip's* Story mode starts you off in Peach Town with a simple car that doesn't handle particularly well. But as you drive around town, meet other racers (the cars talk to each other via text boxes and blinking headlights), and earn new parts (which number in the hundreds), you'll soon find yourself piloting a souped-up hot rod that controls as well as any *Ridge Racer* ride.

Exploring each new city and all the unique parts and tracks they contain quickly becomes an addictive obsession. Sure, the graphics are on the lean side, but the car models are nicely animated, the game moves along at a crisp 60fps, and the control is excellent. The level of car customization is nearly unparalleled and, despite the lack of Internet play, puts bigger-budget games like *Auto Modellista* to shame. Do yourself a favor and snap this one up. **1C**

—James Mielke



NOW ... The best nontraditional racing game since *Beetle Adventure Racing*. And for less than \$20 bucks, anyone can enjoy this one. **OBTAINABLE**

THEN ... *Road Trip* came out at precisely the same time as *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*. To put it nicely, *Road Trip* got owned.

GMR 8/10 CRAZY, CRAZY FUN

GMR 8/10 OVERLOOKED



SEEK & DESTROY

DON'T HATE. PERFORATE

DECEMBER 2002 FOR PLAYSTATION 2

➔ Just like *Road Trip* before it, *Seek & Destroy* is in actuality another *Choro Q* game (*Shin Combat Choro Q*). But instead of racing, you're piloting an armored tank, attempting to liberate the people of the Proton Kingdom from the forces of the Q-Stein Empire.

As is the case with any *Choro Q* game, customization is the draw here, and with dozens of tanks and hundreds of parts to choose from (ranging from flame-throwers and missile launchers to jet boosters and night vision), upgrading your default clunker into a freedom-fighting goliath is a quick and painless process. As in *Road Trip*, every "character" is depicted by a personality-filled tank that animates vividly, with conversations and mission objectives communicated through text boxes.

Taking on these missions, occasionally with a phalanx of allies at your side, ranges from easy to challenging, depending on the equipment you've assembled and the paint scheme you've applied (going into snowy territory? Put on snowy camouflage!). The game features loads of extras—and you have to consider that this excellent portion of a long-running, fully-priced series in Japan can be had in the U.S. of A. for less than \$10. **1C**

—James Mielke

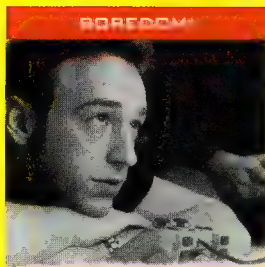


NOW ... For the price of two Happy Meals (or less) you can own this super-cool action game and enjoy the heck out of it. **HARD TO FIND**

THEN ... If you assume budget price equals budget fun, chances are, you overlooked this awesome game.

GMR 8/10 MAJOR

GMR 8/10 TERRIFIC



*DISCOVER THE CURE
FOR BOREDOM.

WE SELL THOUSANDS
OF 100% GUARANTEED
PREOWNED GAMES.

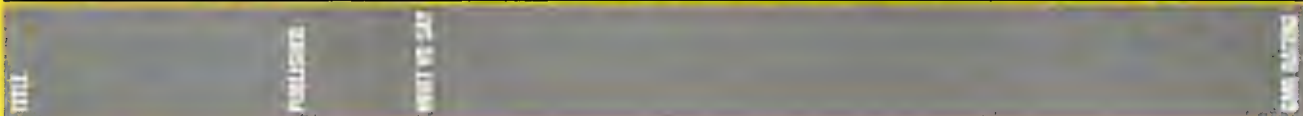
EBGAMES™
electronics boutique

THE LIST

GMR'S EXHAUSTIVE GUIDE TO THE ONLY GAMES THAT MATTER

BUYER'S GUIDE

PS2 TOP 100 TWICE AS BIG FOR A REASON



.hack//Infection	Bandai	The world's first MMORPG, but this time the O stands for "offline." Comes packed with a DVD of the animated series.	7
.hack//Mutation	Bandai	We've exhausted our supply of "something within a something" jokes, so just know that the series starts to pick up in this sequel.	8
Amplitude	Sony	A whole slew of new artists who, naturally, bring along brand-new tunes for your button-pressing pleasure.	8
ATV Offroad Fury	Sony	The key to being a successful ATV offroader lies in launching yourself through the air as often as possible. A fun and floaty racer.	9
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	Interplay	A beautiful-looking <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> -based hack-and-slash that can be played cooperatively with another player.	8
Breath of Fire: Dragon Quarter	Capcom	An RPG that forces you to die and start over multiple times? It sounds ridiculous, but it actually works.	8
Burnout 2: Point of Impact	Acclaim	An aggressive driving simulator that defies the rules of physics. Includes a dedicated Crash mode for aspiring demolition-derby stars.	8
Capcom vs. SNK 2	Capcom	Take the best elements of <i>Street Fighter</i> and <i>King of Fighters</i> , and you'll have the best thing going in the world of 2D combat.	8
Chaos Legion	Capcom	Storm through 15 levels of nonstop action, commanding various squads of bodyguards. It's like <i>Devil May Cry</i> , only not so antisocial.	8
Colin McRae Rally 3	Codemasters	A superb rally racer with superrealistic properties—right down to the extended time you spend sitting in the Ford Focus.	8
Contra: Shattered Soldier	Konami	After numerous shoddy attempts to bring the classic <i>Contra</i> gameplay to a next-gen system, Konami finally gets it right.	9
Crazy Taxi	Acclaim	As good as opening your PlayStation 2, rigging Dreamcast hardware inside, and then loading up a DC build of <i>Crazy Taxi</i> .	8
Dance Dance Revolution: DDRMax	Konami	Before, if you wanted to play <i>DDR</i> , you had to subject yourself to Joe and Jane Public. Now, you can embarrass yourself at home.	8
Dark Cloud 2	Sony	Improves upon the first one in every way imaginable. Building and upgrading weapons to your liking is a blast.	9
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2	Acclaim	Before turning to Larry Flynt for inspiration, <i>XXX</i> was based on Dave Mirra, and it actually focused on—get this—biding.	8
Dead or Alive 2: Hardcore	Tecmo	Before the entire series went Xbox exclusive, Team Ninja's gang of jiggly grapplers found a temporary home on PS2.	8
Deus Ex: The Conspiracy	Eidos	One of the best PC games of 2000 is ported faithfully to PS2. Upgrade your character's skills and attributes as you see fit.	8
Devil May Cry	Capcom	Did you know <i>Devil May Cry</i> was going to be <i>Resident Evil 4</i> before it was spun off into its own series? Oh, you did? Never mind, then.	9
Dynasty Warriors 3	Koei	Melee combat set to the history of ancient China. Enemies number in the hundreds along branching story paths.	8
Escape from Monkey Island	Sony Online	LucasArts has a fine tradition of putting out excellent graphical adventure games, and this latest charmer is no exception.	9
EverQuest Online Adventures	LucasArts	PS2 owners finally get to see what the whole <i>EverQuest</i> thing is about—and will never be seen again.	9
F1 2002	EA Sports	Minor refinements over the 2001 version may not be enough to justify the upgrade, but it's still a solid <i>F1</i> game.	8
Final Fantasy X	Square EA	The PS2's first <i>Final Fantasy</i> does away the traditional overworld, but introduces full voice acting. Artistically beautiful, as always.	9
The Getaway	Sony	Opinions vary wildly on this British-themed gangster (not gangsta) game. Even the British can't agree!	8
Gran Turismo 3 A-spec	Sony	Core gameplay is unchanged, but the graphics get a complete overhaul, which makes <i>GT3</i> the best-playing/looking sim on the market.	10
Grand Theft Auto III	Rockstar Games	A phenomenon of both gameplay and sales. A free-roaming interactive mobster film that's sold more than 8 million copies to date.	9
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Rockstar Games	As bad boy Tommy Vercetti, there's something indescribably cool about cruising Vice City's beach strip while rocking to "Billie Jean."	10
Guilty Gear XX	Sony	Tired of waiting for <i>Street Fighter 4</i> ? This one should more than compensate. Great visuals, great control, and great extras.	8
Half-Life	Sierra	After it was cancelled for Dreamcast, a console version of this PC classic didn't seem very likely. But here we are.	8
Harvest Moon: Save the Homeland	Natsume	It's a farming simulator. It's fun. These two statements may seem wildly incongruous, but somehow, <i>Harvest Moon</i> makes it work.	8
High Heat 2004	3DO	The best ball-game available this year. "Simulation" doesn't seem like a strong enough word to describe it.	9
Hitman 2	Eidos	Most of the problems with the original <i>Hitman</i> have been fixed, making this one of the more rewarding action games on PS2.	9
Hot Shots Golf 3	Sony	Some golf games need something extra to attract gamers. How about arcade-style control, annoying taunts, and multiplayer modes?	9
Ico	Sony	An underappreciated work of art with challenging puzzles, fantastic lighting, and engrossing character relationships.	9
Jak and Daxter: The Precursor Legacy	Sony	The studio that gave birth to <i>Crash Bandicoot</i> brings a couple new mascots and a gorgeous new 3D world to PS2.	8
Jet X20	Sony	More extreme-sports fun, but this time, it's all wet. Finishing is only half the battle; performing tricks factors into the final standings.	8
K-1 Grand Prix	Konami	The budding sport of K1 is faithfully represented here, as are the knockout blows to the jaw that sound just as painful as they look.	8
Kingdom Hearts	Square EA	When the amazing, talented artists from Square join forces with the amazing, talented artists from Disney, good things happen.	8
Klonoa 2: Lunatear's Veil	Namco	<i>Klonoa</i> became a rare find in the later days of PlayStation. The outstanding sequel looks to share the same fate. Grab it if you can.	8
Le Mans 24 Hours	Infogrames	There's an option to play the famous endurance race true-to-life: 24 hours straight of driving. Better stock up on Mountain Dew.	8
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	EA Games	Anything bearing the valuable <i>Lord of the Rings</i> license will sell well. Happily, there's more to this beat-em-up than just the name.	8
Madden NFL 2003	EA Sports	The series' first foray into online console gaming is a success. Everything you love about <i>Madden</i> can now be shared with strangers.	9
The Mark of Kri	Sony	A slick action game with innovative controls: Each button is assigned to a different enemy, allowing for combat with multiple targets.	9
Maximo: Ghosts to Glory	Capcom	It's the spiritual successor to the classic <i>Ghosts 'n' Goblins</i> , complete with heart boxers and insane difficulty.	8
MDK 2 Armageddon	Interplay	Much improved over the original Dreamcast incarnation, <i>MDK 2 Armageddon</i> is one of the better recent action games.	8
Medal of Honor: Frontline	Electronic Arts	A strong single-player campaign paves the way through the beaches of Normandy and the heart of France. Great audio.	8
Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	Konami	There's a lot in this update: 350 VR missions, 150 alternate missions, five Snake Tales, and one skateboard. Yes, a skateboard.	9
Midnight Club 2	Rockstar Games	Rockstar's rebellious racer is now online, but you'd better practice mastering the game's controls before entering competition.	8
Mobile Suit Gundam: Federation vs. Zeon	Bandai	Giant robots are great, but basing them on the <i>Gundam</i> license with Capcom developing makes them greater, if that's even possible.	8
MotoGP 3	Namco	After three attempts, Namco got it right...sort of. The realism is astounding, as long as you ignore the giant Mr. Driller.	8

Game	Platform	Developer	Score
NASCAR Thunder 2003	PS2	EA Sports	9
NBA 2K3	PS2	Sega Sports	9
NBA Street Vol. 2	PS2	Electronic Arts	9
NCAA Football 2003	PS2	EA Sports	9
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit 2	PS2	EA Games	9
NFL 2K3	PS2	Sega Sports	9
NHL 2002	PS2	Electronic Arts	9
NHL 2K3	PS2	Sega Sports	9
Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny	PS2	Capcom	8
Onimusha: Warlords	PS2	Capcom	8
RAD: Robot Alchemic Drive	PS2	Enix	8
Ratchet & Clank	PS2	Sony	8
Rayman 2: Revolution	PS2	Ubi Soft	9
Red Faction	PS2	THQ	9
Resident Evil Code: Veronica X	PS2	Capcom	8
Rez	PS2	Sega	8
Ridge Racer V	PS2	Namco	8
Rumble Racing	PS2	Electronic Arts	8
Rygar: The Legendary Adventure	PS2	Tecmo	9
Sega Sports Tennis	PS2	Sega	8
Silent Hill 2	PS2	Konami	8
The Sims	PS2	Electronic Arts	9
Sky Gunner	PS2	Attus	8
Sky Odyssey	PS2	Activision	8
Sky Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus	PS2	Sony	8
Smuggler's Run	PS2	Rockstar Games	8
SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs	PS2	Sony	9
Splinter Cell	PS2	Ubi Soft	8
Spy Hunter	PS2	Midway	8
SSX	PS2	Electronic Arts	9
SSX Tricky	PS2	Electronic Arts	8
Sub Rebellion	PS2	Metro3D	8
Tekken Tag Tournament	PS2	Namco	8
Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven	PS2	Activision	8
Theme Park Roller Coaster	PS2	Electronic Arts	8
TimeSplitters 2	PS2	Eidos	8
Tokyo Xtreme Racer Zero	PS2	Crave	8
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	PS2	Activision	9
Twisted Metal: Black	PS2	Sony	9
Twisted Metal: Black Online	PS2	Sony	8
Virtua Fighter 4	PS2	Sega	10
Wakeboarding Unleashed	PS2	Activision	9
War of the Monsters	PS2	SCEA	9
Wild Arms 3	PS2	Sony	8
Wipeout Fusion	PS2	Bam	8
World Series Baseball 2K3	PS2	Sega	8
World Soccer: Winning Eleven 6	PS2	Konami	9
WWF SmackDown!: Just Bring It	PS2	THQ	8
Xenosaga	PS2	Namco	9
Zone of the Enders: The 2nd Runner	PS2	Konami	8

[BUY!]

WINNING ELEVEN 6

➔ Hey, you. Yeah, you in the D.C. United jersey. Come over here. Word on the street is you like to do the FIFA. Yeah, that's good stuff, but we got something that's even better. More depth, better strategy, and the most realistic game of soccer you'll ever play. Just \$40 for your first time....



[AVOID!]

ENTER THE MATRIX

➔ We've already reviewed it in this issue, but the point needs to be driven home: Don't be suckered in by the license—you deserve better than this. Sure, dodging bullets during Focus slowdown is mildly entertaining, but the rest of the game was mailed in, first class and no return address.



PC TOP 50 GOTTA MAKE ROOM FOR HALF-LIFE 2...

Aliens vs. Predator 2	Sierra	Three completely different first-person shooters combined into one dark and terrifying gaming experience.	9
Baldur's Gate II: Shadows of Amn	Interplay	The rare occasion when the sequel to a classic goes above and beyond its predecessor. Can't wait for III.	9
Black & White	EA Games	Highly conceptual "god-game" that has you ruling over mortals with a little help from a giant cow-monster.	8
Battlefield 1942	EA Games	Multiplayer shooter set in WWII that lets you jump in and out of vehicles (even planes!) while battling dozens of your friends.	9
Civilization III	Infogrames	Sid Meier's classic just keeps rolling along, getting bigger and more complex while somehow managing to remain just as addictive.	10
Commandos 2	Eidos	Control a squad of elite commandos in WWII as they infiltrate, detonate, and assassinate across multiple battlefields.	8
Day of Defeat	Activision	You won't need to upgrade your videocard to play this teamplay-focused WWII shooter. What a refreshing concept.	8
Diablo II: Lords of Destruction	Blizzard	The sequel to the ultimate dungeon-crawling clickfest should please anyone who wasted their teens playing the first game.	8
Dungeon Siege	Microsoft	Hack and slash doesn't have to be complicated. Sometimes, it can even be in beautiful 3D with no loading time between levels.	8
Enemy Engaged: Comanche v. Hokum	Empire Int.	Extremely realistic chopper sim that's not for the weak of heart or impatient of trigger finger.	9
EverQuest	Sony Online	The massively multiplayer RPG that's so addictive, it makes crack look like Sanka. Play this game at your own risk.	9
EverQuest: Scars of Velious	Sony Online	The expansion pack to EverCrack opens up new worlds, new characters, and tigers with boobies (finally!).	9
F1 2002	EA Sports	Delivers authentic yet accessible Formula One racing enjoyment for every open-wheel racing fan out there.	9
Fallout Tactics	Interplay	Squad-based tactical strategy game set in the same universe as the classic <i>Fallout</i> RPG that sets a new standard.	9
Freedom Force	EA Games	Clever use of strategy and RPG elements help make this witty comic book superhero-themed game one of the best.	10
Freelancer	Microsoft	It's not as simtastic as some might expect a PC space-shooter to be, but that's part of its charm. Random missions keep the fun going.	8
Ghost Recon: Island Thunder	Ubi Soft	This top-notch mission pack makes a decent modern combat simulation into an outstanding one.	8
Giants: Citizen Kabuto	Interplay	A shooter/strategy hybrid full of weird British humor, unique and beautiful 3D graphics, and naked lady sea monsters.	9
Grand Prix 4	Infogrames	It's a tough choice for Formula One fans; <i>GP4</i> and <i>F1 2002</i> are both worthy of your hard-earned dollars.	9
Grand Theft Auto III	Rockstar Games	The poster child for all that's wrong in gaming is chock full of all that's fun in gaming. And you get to import your own MP3s.	10
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	Eidos	An almost-perfect blend of action and stealth, it's a humongous improvement over the first game.	9
IL-2 Sturmovik	Ubi Soft	Amazingly realistic WWII flight sim covering a region seldom visited in computer games: the Eastern Front	9
Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast	LucasArts	Yeah, the lightsaber battles are sweet, but Lando's cameo just about seals the deal. And is his ship fly or what?	9
Kohan: Ahirman's Gift	Strategy First	Surprisingly accessible fantasy-themed real-time strategy that's as much fun in single player as it is against other mages online.	9
Madden NFL 2003	EA Sports	Finally as good as all the superior console football games out there, this one is a gridiron classic on the PC.	9
Max Payne	G.O.D.	Despite some corny writing, this überhip noir videogame feels like a movie, but plays like a great action game.	8
Medal of Honor: Allied Assault	EA Games	Worth it just for the incredibly intense D-Day mission that almost matches the same scene in <i>Saving Private Ryan</i> .	9
Medieval: Total War	Activision	The ultimate historical strategy game has everything from political intrigue to sweeping real-time battles.	9
Microsoft Flight Simulator 2002	Microsoft	The definitive civilian flight simulator. So authentic, actual airline pilots use it to keep their skills sharp.	9
The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind	Bethesda	The definitive, open-ended RPG epic. Sort of like <i>GTA3</i> , but with magic and Elves and all that <i>D&D</i> flava.	9
Motocross Madness 2	Microsoft	It's mud-splattering, off-road supercross fun with this free-wheeling dirtbike simulator from the makers of <i>ATV Offroad Fury</i> .	9
Myth III: The Wolf Age	G.O.D.	Bungie's renowned magical real-time strategy title goes 3D and maintains its fantastic multiplayer reputation.	8
NASCAR Racing 2003	Vivendi Universal	It's the final installment of the series, and it's also the best. There's not much new, but everything's been tweaked to near-perfection.	9
Neverwinter Nights	Infogrames	If you're a <i>D&D</i> nerd, then you already know, but buy this one especially for the multiplayer and user-made mods.	9
No One Lives Forever	Vivendi Universal	Austin Powers ain't got nothing on Cate Archer, the hottest digital chick with a gun since that old hag Lara Croft.	9
No One Lives Forever 2	Vivendi Universal	As funny and stylish as the original '60s spy spoof (if that's even possible) and more fun to play, too.	9
Operation Flashpoint: Cold War Crisis	Codemasters	The first in the highly original series of combat sims, this soldier/flight/tank sim went on to win <i>CGW's</i> 2001 Game of the Year award.	9
Operation Flashpoint: Red Hammer	Codemasters	Letting you play as the bad guys is the sure way into our hearts. Especially when they're nasty Rooskies.	9
Operation Flashpoint: Resistance	Codemasters	Features and content worthy of a brand-new game, this is a benchmark expansion for a classic overlooked game.	9
Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield	Ubi Soft	The command interface and character A.I. have been revamped, but it runs slowly on anything but a high-end rig.	8
Sacrifice	Interplay	Action/strategy hybrid defies the conventions of all the genres it touches, while making for a fantastically original multiplayer experience.	8
Serious Sam	G.O.D.	Brainless running and gunning is an underappreciated way to waste a couple hours with a great-looking game.	8
Shadowbane	Ubi Soft	Because of these silly things called laws, the only way we can attack and capture neighboring cities is through Shadowbane. Look out.	8
Sid Meier's Sim Golf	EA Games	<i>Sim Golf</i> will have you laying out golf courses and building resorts like a virtual Robert Trent Jones.	8
The Sims	EA Games	It's impossible to categorize EA's addictive superblocbuster life simulator, just like it's impossible to stop playing it.	10
The Sims: Hot Date	EA Games	Gamers everywhere, rejoice! Finally, a game where you can actually learn a thing or two about interacting with the opposite sex!	10
The Sims Online	EA Games	If you were merely a <i>Sims</i> addict before, all hope is now lost. All the world's a stage, and your online <i>Sims</i> persona can play any part.	9
The Sims: Unleashed	EA Games	Not just a great addition to EA's behemoth franchise, an essential one. Everyone needs a dog, or maybe a monkey.	9
Unreal II: The Awakening	Infogrames	Somewhat of a letdown in terms of story and gameplay, but good nonetheless. Call us in five years when our gaming rigs can handle it.	8
Wartlords Battletory II	Ubi Soft	RTS and RPG, two great flavors that go great together—especially when stirred together with a big gnarly wizard's staff!	8

[BUY!]

MAX PAYNE

➔ If only *Enter the Matrix* had been more like *Max Payne*, a great action game that was criticized by some for ripping off *The Matrix*, a movie that was criticized by some for ripping off several works of Japanese animation. If only.



[AVOID!]

JOHNNY MNEMONIC

➔ In just two short years, we'll all be opening our 1995 time capsules (you did bury one, right?) and looking back on *Johnny Mnemonic*, where we pointed and clicked a Keanu Reeves lookalike through the entire "game." At least it wasn't *A Walk in The Clouds*.



→ XBOX TOP 50 MARKING THE SPOT FOR ONLINE

Apex	Atari	This racer is fantastic to look at and plays well enough to sit snugly between <i>Project Gotham Racing</i> and <i>Gran Turismo</i> on your shelf.	8
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	Vivendi Universal	A beautiful-looking <i>Dungeons & Dragons</i> -based hack-and-slash that can be played cooperatively with another player.	8
Blood Omen 2	Eidos	The <i>Legacy of Kain</i> story picks up where the original <i>Blood Omen</i> left off, with you in control of the evil-yet-likeable vampire Kain.	8
Burnout	Acclaim	An arcade racer with an emphasis on spectacular crashes, which—now that we think about it—defeats the purpose of competitive racing.	8
Cel Damage	Microsoft	Crazy cartoon car combat with great use of cel-shading and varied multiplayer options. It can quickly become repetitive, however.	8
Colin McRae Rally 3	Codemasters	Everybody's favorite rally racer, Colin McRae, has a brand-new game featuring finely tuned physics and car damage.	8
Crazy Taxi 3: High Roller	Sega	It's hard to improve upon the original, but that didn't stop Sega from trying. Twice. The setting is new, but it plays pretty much the same.	8
Dead or Alive 3	Tecmo	It's not the deepest of fighters, but it definitely competes for the best-looking prize. Plus, the girls are back in all their bouncy glory.	8
Dead or Alive: Xtreme Beach Volleyball	Tecmo	Pro tip: When playing <i>DOAX</i> , have your TV remote close by. If Mom bursts in, hit the surf button and flip to the History Channel. She'll be proud.	8
Fatal Frame	Tecmo	It's creepy. It's gory. It's the Tecmo game without the boobs. Another of those games better enjoyed with the lights off.	8
Genma Onimusha	Capcom	An enhanced port of the PS2 game, <i>Genma Onimusha</i> adds improved graphics, available 5.1 audio output, and a new type of soul energy.	7
Halo	Microsoft	The definitive reason to own an Xbox. There are plenty of secondary reasons, sure, but no Xbox owner should be without <i>Halo</i> .	10
High Heat 2004	3DO	The best ball-game available this year. "Simulation" doesn't seem like a strong enough word to describe it.	9
James Bond 007: NightFire	EA Games	<i>GoldenEye</i> set an impossibly high standard for the Bond license, but <i>NightFire</i> does an admirable job of re-creating the feel of the films.	8
Jet Set Radio Future	Sega	<i>Jet Set Radio Future</i> has substance and an overabundance of style. Sega simplified tagging in favor of a more robust trick system.	8
Madden NFL 2002	Electronic Arts	It's a crowded genre on Xbox, with three different franchises competing for your attention. <i>Madden</i> is always a safe bet.	9
Max Payne	Rockstar Games	The "bullet time" effect is the big draw of this action/shooter. Inspired by Hong Kong action flicks, set against a gritty New York City.	8
Mech Assault	Microsoft	It's a good single-player game, but it really shines on Xbox Live, where you're pitted against other mech pilots.	8
Medal of Honor: Frontline	EA Games	A strong single-player campaign paves the way across the beaches of Normandy and through the heart of France. Great audio.	8
Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	Konami	Includes the original <i>MGS2: Sons of Liberty</i> , five brand-new missions featuring Solid Snake, and a slew of challenging VR missions.	9
MotoGP 2	THQ	What we said: "Can only be described as the best motorcycle-racing sim on the planet." What more do you need?	9
NASCAR Thunder 2003	EA Sports	Hate driving left for hours? NASCAR games probably aren't your thing. But if you "get it," <i>Thunder 2003</i> should be right up your alley.	9
NBA 2K3	Sega Sports	Yet another compelling reason to sign up for Xbox Live, <i>NBA2K3</i> is the best-playing game of hoops on the system.	9
NBA Live 2003	EA Sports	An improvement over previous versions, with a heavier focus on the faster-paced aspects of the game as opposed to a true simulation.	8
NBA Street Vol. 2	Electronic Arts	Even better than the first, <i>Vol. 2</i> takes you through the legendary players and teams of the NBA's storied history. A great deal of fun.	9
NCAA College Basketball 2K3	Sega	We're secretly hoping next year's version features an NCAA Rules Infraction mode. Think of the possibilities....	8
NFL 2K3	Sega	Sega's latest football effort compares nicely to the firmly entrenched <i>Madden</i> juggernaut, and even beats it in some areas.	9
NHL Hitz 20-02	Midway	<i>NHL Hitz</i> rhymes with <i>NFL Blitz</i> . That's no mere coincidence. Hockey with no rules is just as fun as its lawless football counterpart.	8
Panzer Dragoon Orta	Sega	Aesthetically beautiful and a dream to play. See what Saturn owners were enjoying seven years ago [the original <i>Panzer Dragoon</i> is included].	8
Phantom Crash	Phantagram	The Xbox certainly isn't lacking in mech titles. The quirky, unique <i>Phantom Crash</i> has upgradeable mechs and a story-driven 1P mode.	9
Project Gotham Racing	Microsoft	The refinement of the Kudos point system is the biggest difference between <i>Project Gotham</i> and its Dreamcast predecessor.	8
RalliSport Challenge	Microsoft	This rally racer is one of the best examples of the Xbox's power. More arcade than simulation, with enough depth to please both camps.	8
Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Tides of War	Activision	The single-player missions still aren't much to write home about, but at least you can play them with a pal. The online play is gravy.	8
Robotech: Battlecry	TDK Mediactive	Cel-shaded graphics effectively capture the look and feel of the classic 1980s cartoon. Especially enjoyable for fans of the series.	8
Rocky	Ubi Soft	The best boxing game you can get for your Xbox. A technical knock-out, considering there's not much competition.	8
Sega GT 2002	Sega	Sega's answer to the <i>Gran Turismo</i> phenomenon. Not quite as expansive in terms of tracks and cars, but better with the details.	8
Shenmue II	Microsoft	The second chapter of Yu Suzuki's opus sees our hero Ryo traversing the streets of Hong Kong in search of his father's killer.	7
Silent Hill 2: Restless Dreams	Konami	A creepy port of a creepy game with a creepy bonus: a creepy extra episode of the creepy story. Play without lights for extra creepiness.	8
Star Wars Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast	LucasArts	As usual, the <i>Star Wars</i> universe inspires great aesthetic design to compliment Raven Software's solid sense of game design.	8
Steel Battalion	Capcom	If you want to play this game, you'll have to shell out \$200 for the massive controller. For those with the cash, it's well worth it.	8
Test Drive	Atari	Race for pink slips on the underground circuit, and live out your Vin Diesel role-playing fantasy. Or just act normal and race cars.	8
The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind	Bethesda	An exhaustive open-ended RPG that essentially allows you to make it up as you go along, with hundreds of people to talk to.	8
TimeSplitters 2	Eidos	Everything good about the [PS2] original is here, with loads of new multiplayer options including maps, weapons, and game modes.	8
ToeJam & Earl III	Sega	Toe Jam and Earl haven't seen much action lately, but the funk is strong this time, and it's better to enjoy funk with a partner. Oh yeah.	7
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	Ubi Soft	There's not much of a graphical upgrade from the PC version, but the interface and audio are improved. Goes great with Xbox Live.	8
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Ubi Soft	Comparisons to <i>Metal Gear Solid</i> were inevitable. <i>Splinter Cell</i> holds its own, and even outdoes Konami's behemoth at times.	9
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	Activision	If you have to have <i>Tony Hawk 3</i> , improved graphics and framerate and the custom soundtrack option make this the best version to get.	9
Unreal Championship	Atari	Mindless deathmatching with great weapon design and entertaining multiplayer modes, including the sport-like Bombing Run.	8
Wakeboarding Unleashed	Activision	A surprisingly stellar extreme-sport title that manages to make the <i>Tony Hawk</i> formula work on water. Watch out for the gators.	9
World Series Baseball 2K3	Sega Sports	WSB2K3 is the best-looking baseball game and it has a great Franchise mode, but it's got A.I. issues that still need to be worked out.	8

[BUY!]

PANZER DRAGON ORTA

➔ When Sega unleashed the *Panzer Dragoon* universe on unsuspecting gamers, shooters never looked so good. Now that we're all suspecting gamers, there's no reason not to own this beautiful, action-packed shooter, which also includes the original *Panzer*.



[AVOID!]

TAO FENG: FIST OF THE LOTUS

➔ Recent sales charts suggest that many of you are buying the mediocre *Tao Feng*, despite our printed warnings. Not that our feelings are hurt or anything, but can you really not wait for *Soul Calibur 2*?



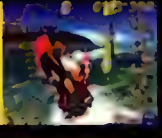
→ GAMECUBE TOP 50 STILL GOT SOME MUSCLE

All-Star Baseball 2004	Acclaim	The graphics keep getting better each year, but the gameplay isn't keeping pace. Nice presentation, but the batting interface needs work.	7
Animal Crossing	Nintendo	The game that never ends is based largely on routine chores, yard work, and interior decorating. So why is it so much fun to play?	9
Beach Spikers	Sega	Easy to pick up and easy to play, like <i>Virtua Tennis</i> . As with most arcade sports games, it's definitely better as a multiplayer affair.	8
Bomberman Generation	Majesco	A surviving member of the Old School, <i>Bomberman</i> has earned some tenure in the industry. This time, he sports a cel-shaded look.	8
Burnout 2: Point of Impact	Acclaim	The best-looking—and best-playing—racer on the system. Be prepared to spend many hours in Crash mode.	8
Cubivore	Atlus	A simple but compelling game of reproduction and cannibalism. Plus, you can get "hump points." You know you're interested.	7
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2	Acclaim	Before turning to Larry Flynt for inspiration, <i>XXX</i> was based on the well-mannered Dave Mirra and actually focused on—get this—biking.	8
Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem	Nintendo	This game, if you let it, will mess with your head. The insanity effects are clever (the first time) and the scenery is downright creepy.	8
FIFA 2002	Electronic Arts	Though there's always room for improvement, EA's soccer series has been fairly decent. Plus, there's no real alternative yet.	7
Godzilla: Destroy All Monsters Melee	Atari	Godzilla & Co. wrecking cityscapes and each other, with support for up to four players. What's not to like?	7
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	EA Games	This Potter kid seems to be pretty popular, so the folks at EA decided to make a <i>Zelda</i> -esque adventure based on his magical exploits.	7
High Heat 2004	3DO	The best ball-game available this year. "Simulation" doesn't seem like a strong enough word to describe it.	9
The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker	Nintendo	It looks and feels like the best <i>Zelda</i> game ever, but sailing back and forth in the overworld just feels like work.	9
Luigi's Mansion	Nintendo	We all wanted Mario at launch, and we got this. Like getting socks for Christmas, it's good and comfortable, but not what we wanted.	7
Madden NFL 2002	Electronic Arts	Those who bought the GameCube version instead of the PS2 edition were treated to roughly the same game. Good for them, though.	9
Mario Party 4	Nintendo	There are few things better in life than three friends, <i>Mario Party</i> , and a healthy flow of alcoholic beverages (if you're legal, of course).	8
Medal of Honor: Frontline	EA Games	A new story of D-Day and the ensuing action on the French front lines. The GameCube version has a multiplayer mode the others don't.	7
Metroid Prime	Nintendo	As if they dissected <i>Super Metroid</i> , added a dimension, and put it back together again with slick graphics. In fact, it's exactly like that.	10
MLB Slugfest 20-04	Midway	What <i>Blitz</i> is to football, <i>Slugfest</i> is to baseball. If you can't sit through nine innings of the regular game, this one's for you.	7
NASCAR Thunder 2003	EA Games	It's apparently the fastest growing "sport" in America, and <i>Thunder 2003</i> is packed under the hood, including an in-depth Career mode.	9
NBA 2K2	Sega	More of a sim than <i>NBA Courtside</i> , but it's the best basketball simulation available. Includes a great game of street ball, too.	9
NBA 2K3	Sega	Added to this year's version is a slick ESPN interface, an upgraded Franchise mode, and a fresh class of rookies.	9
NBA Courtside	Nintendo	No longer under the Nintendo development umbrella, Left Field's final installment of the <i>Courtside</i> series is a worthy b-ball game.	8
NBA Street Vol. 2	EA Sports	Even better than the first, <i>Vol. 2</i> takes you through the legendary players and teams of the NBA's storied history. A great deal of fun.	9
NCAA College Basketball 2K3	Sega	We're secretly hoping next year's version features an NCAA Rules Infraction mode. Think of the possibilities...	8
Pac-Man World 2	Namco	Purists will yell "HERESY!" at the new Pac-Man who can take multiple hits. People who actually enjoy good games will ignore them.	7
Phantasy Star Online Episode I & II	Sega	Unhealthily addictive. The pursuit of rare items helps one ignore the somewhat repetitive battle (and the \$9 monthly fee).	9
Pikmin	Nintendo	<i>Mario</i> creator Shigeru Miyamoto got the idea for this quirky strategy game from observing his personal garden. What kind of garden?	8
Resident Evil	Capcom	This remake could almost be described as a new game. But is it really <i>Resident Evil</i> without the laughably bad voice acting?	9
Resident Evil 0	Capcom	This one actually is a brand-new game, with significant changes such as droppable items and the dirty-sounding partner-swapping.	8
Sega Soccer Slam	Sega	An arcade-style soccer game with off-the-wall characters, arenas, and power-ups. And it's still better than <i>Virtua Striker</i> !	8
Skies of Arcadia: Legend	Sega	If you missed it on Dreamcast—and many of you did—you've been given a second chance. It's even got new characters.	8
Smuggler's Run: Warzones	Rockstar Games	An enhanced version of <i>Smuggler's Run 2</i> , with new vehicles and maps and an expanded multiplayer mode with support for four players.	8
Sonic Adventure 2: Battle	Sega	Remember when you and your friends held daily Sonic vs. Mario debates? Don't you feel silly now? Or at least a little old?	7
Sonic Adventure DX	Sega	SA2 got an upgrade, while the original <i>Adventure</i> ...uh, gets a bunch of old Game Gear games. Still a classic worth revisiting, though.	7
Sonic Mega Collection	Sega	Sure, the <i>Sonic</i> games were great, but \$40 may be too steep an asking price for a collection of old and unenhanced games.	7
Star Fox Adventures	Nintendo	Rare's last Nintendo effort took forever, but <i>Star Fox Adventures</i> takes its inspiration from <i>The Legend of Zelda</i> —and that ain't bad.	7
Star Wars Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader	LucasArts	At times, <i>Rogue Leader</i> synchs closely with scenes from the movies. Impressive when you consider it took only nine months to make.	9
Star Wars: The Clone Wars	LucasArts	All the intense action of the movie, without melodramatic writing and weak acting. As with many GC games, multiplayer is a big draw.	7
Super Mario Sunshine	Nintendo	Maybe not quite as groundbreaking as <i>Super Mario 64</i> was, but even when Nintendo "misses," it makes a big splash.	9
Super Monkey Ball	Sega	Monkeys in balls! An exceptional game based on a simple concept; some of the later levels will eat you for lunch.	8
Super Monkey Ball 2	Sega	Even more monkeys in balls running around for your entertainment! The extra game modes add quite a bit to the simple concept.	8
Super Smash Bros. Melee	Nintendo	A Nintendo fanatic's dream, if only for the exhaustive gallery of collectible Nintendo-rabilia. Plus, you can beat the crap out of Jigglypuff.	9
TimeSplitters 2	Eidos	Everything good about the original is here, with loads of new multiplayer options including maps, weapons, and game modes.	7
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	Activision	For those with the DualShock hardwired into their psyche, switching over to the oddly-shaped GameCube controller can prove difficult.	9
Ultimate Muscle	Bandai	If the soap-opera antics of the WWE don't go far enough over the top, perhaps the wacky <i>Ultimate Muscle</i> will be more to your liking.	9
Wario World	Nintendo	After all this time, Wario has become quite effective at reclaiming his stolen treasure. Too effective, as <i>Wario World</i> is over far too quickly.	7
Wave Race: Blue Storm	Nintendo	Great wave physics, awesome weather effects, and a deeper control scheme than the original. An underrated gem of a racer.	8
WWE Wrestlemania X8	THQ	Ratings have cooled and Stone Cold has had some run-ins with John Law, but that's irrelevant, as wrestling games will always sell.	8
X-Men: Next Dimension	Activision	If you absolutely must have an X-Men fighting game, this is your best bet. Better fighters exist, but they don't feature Wolverine.	7

[BUY!]

WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM

➔ Now that we think about it, the third *Wave Race* (the first was on the original Game Boy) is a bit underrated. The added complexity of the controls takes some getting used to, but it still has the best water effects and physics around.



[AVOID!]

THE SUM OF ALL FEARS

➔ Speaking of bad games based on movie licenses, *The Sum of All Fears* is another one to avoid. How they managed to distill an action game from a movie mostly about politics is beyond us. What's next, *Thirteen Days* as a combat flight sim?



➔ PS1 TOP 25 BIRTH OF A LEGACY

TITLE	PUBLISHER	WHAT WE SAY	CMR RATING
Castlevania: Symphony of the Night	Konami	Like <i>Super Metroid</i> , with vampires instead of Metroids. And it was on PlayStation. A certifiable classic.	9
Chrono Cross	Square EA	It wasn't quite the <i>Chrono Trigger</i> sequel most people expected, but it's a magnificent game in its own right.	10
Colin McRae Rally 2.0	Codemasters	Americans might be slow in recognizing the name, but race fans know the Colin McRae games were and are among the best.	9
Crash Team Racing	Sony	Countless mascot racers that flooded store shelves during the PlayStation era, and <i>Crash Team Racing</i> was the only good one. Really.	9
Einhandler	Sony	"Einhandler" is German for "awesome 2D shooter that should have sold way more than it did." That, or "one-handed." We're not sure.	9
Final Fantasy Anthology	Square EA	We're not exactly sure how two games out of a series of nine constitutes an "anthology," but they're good games nonetheless.	9
Final Fantasy IX	Square EA	The crystals return to the series, along with a four-member party, blue magic, and black mages. Biggs and Wedge, sadly, do not.	10
Final Fantasy VII	Sony	Brought RPGs into the U.S. spotlight and contained the most debated plot twist of an era. We won't spoil it, but no, you can't.	9
Final Fantasy VIII	Square EA	Things were more "real" this time around—as real as chocobos, guardian forces, and time compression could be, anyway.	9
Gran Turismo	Sony	Of course, it seems foolish now, but the replays had some of us doing double-takes to make sure we weren't watching real race footage.	9
Gran Turismo 2	Sony	More tracks, more cars, more races, more cars, more cars, more cars, more modes, and more cars. The second lap was even better than the first.	10
Madden NFL 2001	Electronic Arts	Don't call it a comeback, he's been here for years. Play a version of <i>Madden</i> in which the Rams could actually win with Kurt Warner.	9
Metal Gear Solid	Konami	Hideo Kojima's cinematic classic continues to impress, and its video was the first to unofficially win E3's Game of Show. Twice.	10
NFL GameDay '97	Sony	Helped to steal the football crown from <i>Madden</i> (only to fumble it right back a few years later).	9
NHL '98	Electronic Arts	A decent game of hockey, and one of the series' brighter spots. Played in college dorms throughout the country.	9
Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus	GT Interactive	An unlikely hero rises up to overthrow big business. It's very clever...and the political overtones are great for that last-minute term paper.	9
Point Blank	Namco	If <i>Time Crisis</i> taught us to be killers, then surely <i>Point Blank</i> taught us how to shoot up a car before it falls on us from 40 stories up.	9
Resident Evil 2	Capcom	Zombies running amok in Raccoon City; more B-movie voice acting running amok on your speakers. Enough to fill two discs this time!	9
Ridge Racer Type 4	Namco	Plenty of cars, silky-smooth graphics, and of all things, a Story mode. Best played with the Jockey controller.	9
Street Fighter Alpha 3	Capcom	Another well-executed arcade port and arguably the best version of <i>Street Fighter</i> to grace the system.	9
Tekken 3	Namco	An amazing conversion, given the difference between the arcade and PlayStation hardware at the time. Set the standard for bonuses.	10
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	Activision	Some say it's the best installment of the series in terms of control, music, and course design. So do we, actually.	10
Twisted Metal 2	Sony	The granddaddy of vehicular combat games. Sweet Tooth is damning evidence that clowns and anything related to clowning is evil.	9
Worms Armageddon	Hasbro Int.	A highly addictive turn-based strategy game and a practical alternative to throwing grenades at the sidewalk after a rain shower.	9
You Don't Know Jack	Sierra	The ultimate judge of useless-yet-impressive knowledge, assuming you still can't find your <i>Star Wars</i> edition of <i>Trivial Pursuit</i> .	9

➔ GBA TOP 25 WAR ON THE GO

TITLE	PUBLISHER	DESCRIPTION	CMR RATING
Advance Wars	Nintendo	Turn-based military strategy that should be a part of everyone's GBA library. Once you get sucked in, it's hard to pull yourself away.	8
Baseball Advance	THQ	There are only four stadiums and no multiplayer, but it's still a great game of baseball.	8
Castlevania: Circle of the Moon	Konami	<i>Castlevania</i> was meant to be played in two dimensions, and this game shows why. A complex card system governs your special abilities.	9
Castlevania: Harmony of Dissonance	Konami	The second <i>Castlevania</i> is one of the best reasons to own a Game Boy Advance. The colors are brighter and the bosses are bigger.	10
F-Zero Maximum Velocity	Nintendo	An enhanced port of the classic SNES racer with improved graphics and four-player support.	8
Golden Sun	Nintendo	A deep combat engine and brilliant graphics make this the best RPG available on GBA.	9
Golden Sun: The Lost Age	Nintendo	Picks up right where the first one lets off. The battle system remains basically unchanged, but puzzles are much more rewarding.	8
GT Advance Championship	THQ	A great-looking/playing racer with one major drawback: a tedious password save system. If you can get past that, well, good for you.	9
Kirby: Nightmare in Dream Land	Nintendo	A remake of the NES classic <i>Kirby's Adventure</i> with updated graphics and multiplayer support.	8
Klonoa: Empire of Dreams	Namco	Straying from the original formula, this <i>Klonoa</i> is more of a puzzle game than a platformer, with great graphics and sound.	8
Konami Krazy Racers	Konami	A <i>Mario Kart</i> -esque mascot racer filled with classic Konami characters like Dracula, Goemon, and MGS's Ninja.	9
Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past	Nintendo	Invite three friends and you've got a bona fide <i>Zelda</i> party. Drink Red Medicine till you puke and skinny dip in Lake Hylia!	9
Lufia: Ruins of Lore	Atlus	Perennially overshadowed by Square's offerings, the <i>Lufia</i> series is just as engaging as <i>Final Fantasy</i> . It's also more challenging.	8
Lunar Legend	Ubi Soft	The anime cut-scenes and superb voice acting may be gone, but the great <i>Lunar</i> gameplay and story remain intact.	8
Mario Kart: Super Circuit	Nintendo	A balanced blend of <i>Super Mario Kart</i> and <i>Mario Kart 64</i> that even includes all the tracks from the former.	8
Mega Man Zero	Capcom	A difficult yet engaging installment of the <i>X</i> side story played as Zero, who is equipped with an arm cannon and beam saber.	8
Metroid Fusion	Nintendo	The follow-up to <i>Super Metroid</i> is eight years late, but the wait was well worth it. An adventure that ends way too quickly.	9
Phantasy Star Collection	Sega	Straightforward classic RPG action that's been overlooked for far too long. Includes <i>Phantasy Star</i> 1, 2, and 3.	9
Rayman Advance	Ubi Soft	<i>Rayman</i> is just as good in 2D as he is in 3D. It looks great and provides a decent challenge.	8
Super Mario Advance	Nintendo	Aside from the odd naming system, you can't really complain about a portable version of <i>Super Mario Bros. 2</i> .	8
Super Mario Advance 2: Super Mario World	Nintendo	There's really not much else that can be said except "portable <i>Super Mario World</i> " and "you should buy it."	9
Super Puzzle Fighter II	Capcom	Sometimes, you just get bored with <i>Tetris</i> . <i>Puzzle Fighter II</i> is a fantastic port of a fantastic and highly addictive game. Buy it now.	8
Tactics Ogre: The Knight of Lodis	Atlus	An incredibly deep strategy RPG with a branching story line and a rewarding battle system.	8
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	Activision	It's amazing how they managed to cram <i>Tony Hawk</i> into a cartridge while keeping the essence of the game true to the console version.	8
Yoshi's Island: Super Mario Advance 3	Nintendo	Yoshi is the star of this show, one of the greatest 2D platformers ever put to silicon. There are even a couple of new bonus levels.	9



HE'S OLD! HE'S PISSED! GAME GEEZER

TELEPHONES ARE A FAD. BACK IN THE DAY, THEY JUST YELLED REALLY LOUD

➔ Gather round my knees here, kids. I got something special to show you this month.

"Aw, jeez, Mr. Geezer. Our moms said they'd call the police if you did that again."

Yeah, well, your moms should loosen up their knickers and live a little. They don't know what they're missing. Anyway, I meant something else. I'm talking about this thing right here. The Game Boy Advance SP.

"Uh, yeah, Mr. Geezer. We know. Those are like so six months ago. We want to play games on our cell phones now."

On your cell phones? See, every time I start thinking you kids might be starting to get some sense knocked into you, you go and say something stupid like this. Please let this lump in my colon be cancer, because I've about had it on this planet.

Listen, I know the whole damn world carries cell phones now. It's not like I can get away from all you imbeciles with these things attached to your faces 24/7 like electronic pacifiers. Seems like I can't even do my business in the men's room anymore without having to listen to

some pompous, Dockers-wearing dillweed flap his gums in the stall next to mine. Here's a thought: How about you shut up and let me get the flow going? I have enough trouble as it is, without having some self-important jackass killing my concentration. Oh, and after you hang up, try aiming in the bowl for a change.

"Well, we better get going now—"

Oh no, you don't! You got me started, so you can stay and listen now. You see this game right here? This is called *WarioWare Inc.*, and it's one of the best games of the year so far on any platform. But you can play it only on this thing right here—the Game Boy Advance. It takes a hell of a lot of creativity and brains to come up with something that sounds as stupid as—but plays as great as—*WarioWare*. Games that last a total of five seconds? Hell, that should be right up the alley of you low-attention-span dimwits. And coming right around the corner from this game is *Advance Wars 2*, which you better buy on Day Freaking 1 if you have any sense left in you whatsoever.

My point: You can't beat the GBA, and those who

try—especially the cell phone companies—are doomed to failure. The catalog of great games is huge now, and the redesigned SP is even more beautiful than Mrs. Geezer in her buttless leopard-skin unitard.

I saw a whole bunch of these cell phone games when I hobbled down to E3 in May, and let me tell you, there wasn't anything but a whole lot of suck going on. And Tetris. These companies are gonna spend boatloads of money trying to convince us to give up our current phones and Game Boys to get one of these newfangled, color game-playing phones, but until they come up with even one game that's half as good as *WarioWare* or *Castlevania* or *Donkey Kong Country* or *Metroid Fusion*, they can take that fancy piece of junk and, if the phone part still works, give me a ring at 1-800-GET-BENT.

Bah! 



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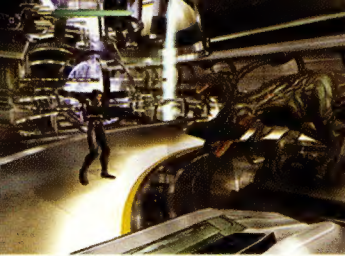
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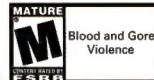
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